

digit

February 2007

Fast Track *to*

BLOGGING

An Introduction To **Blogging**

Entering the Community

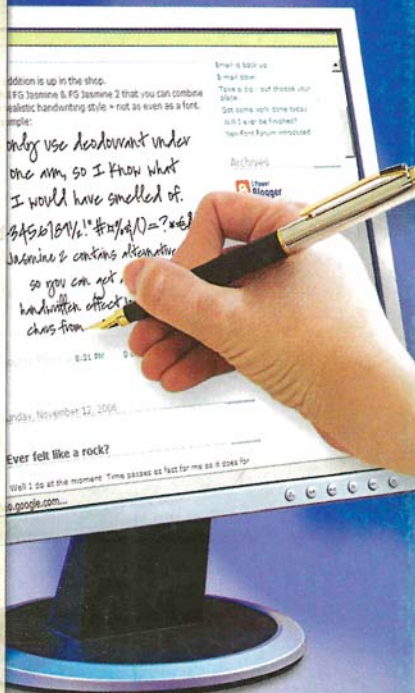
Writing Blog Posts

Monetising Your Blog

Getting Noticed

Blogging Ethics

Additional Resources



Jasubhai
DIGITAL MEDIA

YOUR HANDY GUIDE TO EVERYDAY TECHNOLOGY

Fast Track to **Blogging**

By Team Digit

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Free with Digit. Not to be sold separately. If you have paid separately for this book, please e-mail the editor at editor@thinkdigit.com along with details of location of purchase, for appropriate action.

No More Excuses

From what blogging is to the ethical rules that bloggers should follow, this book covers Everything About Blogging. It will make you rich, famous, and loved by one and all. Provided you do the hard work we're going to tell you to, and provided you've got what it takes...

Jokes and pitches apart, this is an important point: many a would-be blogger remains just that, because he or she is not confident about having "what it takes." There's the fear of failure. Before we tell you anything else, we should tell you this: overcome that fear, and give it a shot. A lot of people are doing it. Some so mediocre, you wouldn't believe it.

You've probably been harbouring this secret desire to start a blog. Or you've started one and haven't posted in six months. Or you've just been putting it off waiting for inspiration for that first, grand post that tells the world you've arrived. Don't remain in any of these situations, is what we're telling you.

It's difficult to write a how-to on blogs, because everyone has a viewpoint, and it's difficult to justify one's own. What we say here about how to write a good blog may not be the best advice you'll get, we have to admit. But we've made a sincere effort. Besides, we haven't only spoken about the how-to of it: we also talk about how to make money off your blog, how to get your blog noticed by the search engines, what makes for ethical blogging, and more.

Ultimately, however, we can only be an inspiration and a gentle holding hand. Now that you have this in your hands, you're just Chapter 1 away from getting your blog set up. And well begun is half done, as the wise man put it.

Go ahead, indulge your armchair ambitions a bit.

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An Introduction To Blogging



Maintaining a diary was something many parents advocated to their school going children. It served two purposes: improve language skills and handwriting. The beneficial side effect was that it was a record of one's daily activities as a child—something that was interesting to read in later years. Now...

Diaries are seen as intimate friends by those who maintain them. The private accounts, the writer's intimate thoughts and ideas which are detailed in diaries offer a glimpse into the person's true nature. This makes diaries interesting reading and probably the most famous of such an account is the one by Anne Frank which chronicles her and her family's life under the Nazi rule during World War II, and which was ultimately published. Tragic accounts aside, the content of a diary—no matter how mundane from the writer's perspective—can be interesting to people in a different place and time.

1.1 What Is A Blog?

A Web Log (or just “blog”) is the broad term applied to the online variant of the personal diary. Unlike diaries, blogs are intended to be public. Thanks to the ease with which blogs can be put online, people who have anything to say have eagerly jumped on the blogging bandwagon, making blogs a powerful social networking tool, and when combined with the power of the Internet, transcends geographical borders. Putting one's thoughts and ideas online makes it easier to find like minded people to collaborate with.

1.2 The Uses Of Blogs

People blog for many reasons—some use it truly as an online diary, detailing their lives. The mundane-ness of a blog entry is what endears it to the readers—events that offer a slice of life of a citizen in one country can be interesting to people in another. Furthermore, the relative anonymity that the Net offers allows even introverts to open up. Some blog to convey a message to the world, especially when other channels are not available, or when revealing information through the usual channels would prove detrimental to their existence, as in the case of Chinese bloggers.

Some use blogs to convey a message in a more informal manner than is possible through usual mass media channels, as in the case of politicians who use their blogs to reach out to their constituencies or organisations who reveal information about themselves that does not make it to mass media channels—like the internal working environment—which could be of interest to prospective employees. Information put up in a blog is seen as more sincere since it is shorn of all the trappings of a mass media presentation. This helps build a rapport with the targeted audience, which would probably explain why organisations encourage their employees to blog (with strict limits on what can be put online, of course).

1.3 Types of Blogs

The word “blog” give the impression that the account is textual in nature, probably due to the association with the diary. But on the Net, it is commonplace to see blogs with pictures (why type in a thousand words when a picture will do?) called photo blogs. Video blogs are a step further from Photoblogs (why put up a thousand pictures when a video will do?). Audio blogs incorporate audio clips (why type out a long message when it can be recorded and played back?). All of the above are similar in the aspect that they are the expression of personal opinion of a single entity, what differs is the medium of communication. Moblogging which is the latest trend in this field of activity refers to reading and posting to blogs via a mobile phone.

1.4 Blog Statistics

There are no confirmed and updated figures with regard to the number of blogs in the blogosphere. Like most initial efforts at diary writing, blogs too are abandoned as quickly as they are created. And, as this chapter advocates, many sign up to blogs because they would like to try out the features of the platform first hand

Some Esoteric-sounding Jargon

blog, blogging, blogger: “To blog” means to write an entry into the blog. The person doing the blogging is called a blogger.

Blogosphere: The World of blogs and bloggers, a subset of the WWW.

Post: A blog refers to the entire site, and every entry in the blog is also called a post. “To post” means to write a post to the blog.

Vblog: Short for Video blogs. The post is usually in the form of a video clip, also called a Screencast.

Blogroll: Bloggers include links to other blogs they regularly visit, in their blog. This is the Blogroll. Linking between blogs is seen as an important part of creating a popular blog.

Podcast/Audiocast: A blog where the post is an audio file that can be listened to.

Trackback: When a blog is quoted and linked to by another blog, it becomes a trackback to the former blog. Trackbacks are an indication of a blog's popularity and authority.

Permalink: A Blog page can contain many posts. A Permalink refers to the unique URL that points to a particular post. Having a permalink allows direct access to a post, rather than a page.

API: Short for Application Programming Interface. The “interface” offers clues to what this refers to: it is a set of routines with which two programs can interact.

RSS: Short for Rich Site Summary (and often corrupted as Really Simple Syndication). This offers a way for the creator of an article to distribute it to a large audience. The creator of the article generates an RSS feed, which is a document created in XML. People desirous of being informed need to subscribe to the

RSS feed, which can be read using specialised applications called feedreaders. ATOM is another syndication format like RSS.

Bookmarking: It is difficult to remember all the URLs you visited. A bookmark makes this exercise easier by storing the URL as a link. All browsers have a bookmarking feature, which can be used to track your favourite sites. Bookmarking sites allow you to keep your favourites list online so that it is accessible from any place. An example of such site is del.icio.us.

Community Editing: This refers to a process where the relevance of a news item is decided by the masses, rather than a single authority. For example, visitors to Digg.com can read news submitted by other visitors and rate them. News items receiving a higher rating are automatically propelled higher up the list, eventually ending up on the home page.

Social Networking: Simply put, making new acquaintances and keeping in touch with existing ones.

CMS: Short for Content Management System. There are a class of applications which ease the management of dynamic sites. “Dynamic” sites are those which have a high frequency of updating. For example, a Web site containing a bulletin board where many people come and interact would need to display the latest message typed in. Without a CMS managing this, it would be impossible for a Web administrator to make modifications to the webpage code everytime someone adds a message. Blogging software are a type of CMS.

Pinging: In the context of blogs, pinging means informing a server that tracks blogs about changes to a blog. Blog tracking sites like weblogs.com, technorati.com, etc., update their listings every time a ping is received, so visitors to such sites can have access to the freshest blog posts.

before committing to it. Any figure put up will be wrong if only active blogs were to be considered—of course, defining an “active” blog is a subjective matter again.

The most recent available statistics state “The blogosphere is doubling in size every 6 months. It is now over 60 times bigger than it was 3 years ago. On average, a new weblog is created every second of every day”, and a blog search engine claims to index 5.5 crore blogs.

Source : <http://www.technorati.com/weblog/2006/04/96.html>

1.5 Making the most of Blogs

As is the case with the search for any other topic on the Web, you start off with a search engine. Two popular, specialised, blog search engines are available at technorati.com and blogsearch.google.com. Both sites offer an Advanced Search function and that is the best place to start. While technorati.com can offer results based on “Authority”, which is an indicator of the number of other blogs linking to it; blogsearch.google.com can search on the Author field.

From the results thrown up, you pick one and land at a blog. At first glance, the font size and colour, and the page background colour should not jar the reading experience. The content you are after preferably should be easily accessible without requiring a lot of scrolling. The layout should not be difficult to comprehend with too many links and ads strewn all over. The Page content should not leave you feeling ambushed—as would be the case when a couple of 500 KB images start loading, when all you were expecting was a recipe.

Assuming that the content is great, you can browse through other posts on the same subject by the blogger using the Tag or

Category links provided, or you can search through the blog using the search utility. You can commend the blogger for the post or air your views about it, which can be done with the Comment box. You can bookmark the site using a link that allows posting to your account in del.icio.us. You can share your find with your friends, either through an “email this page” link or through sites like Digg.com. You can subscribe to the blog’s RSS feed so that you are informed whenever the blogger makes a new post. You can ask for more information from the blogger, using the contact email address or read about the blogger on the “about me” page. And finally, you can visit the blogs the blogger frequents, by using the Blogroll. And the whole process repeats itself at the next blog.

Keeping track of the blogs you have visited and are interested in can quickly become a huge task. Technorati and blogsearch.google.com also offer a way to track your favourite blogs in one page. At Technorati.com, you can bookmark the blogs that interest you and store a custom page with links to them. After signing up to technorati.com, you can add any blog to your favourites with a single click. So the next time onwards, you only need to visit the Favourites page. Google.com also allows this through its www.google.com/reader link, but it is comparatively more complicated.

Even if you already have a list of blogs that you regularly visit and have subscribed to their RSS feeds, it is advisable to frequently haunt technorati.com or blogsearch.google.com to be abreast of newer, interesting blogs.

1.6 Blogging Deciphered

Contrary to popular assumption, blogging isn’t achieved in a single swoop. There are three distinct processes and three not-so-distinct entities involved in blogging.

A **blogging client**: The post content is prepared using a blogging client. A client allows the blogger to forget about the intricacies of creating a Web page in HTML and allows him to focus on creating the content. A client usually includes a text editor that allows text formatting; it may include additional tools to facilitate the inclusion of pictures or other files into the blog.

A **blogging platform**: A Blogging platform is the software part of a blog which contains the code that grants a blog its features and layout. A blogging platform needs to be installed on a server, along with other essential add-ons for the blog to be functional. Add-ons include the language interpreter in which the platform is coded, like PHP or Perl; and a database where the posts are stored, like MySQL.

A **blog host**: Every site on the Internet is hosted on a Web server. Unless a page is put on a Web server it is not available online. A Web host is the entity that offers the Web space and Web server to publish Web pages. A blog host goes one step further and installs the blogging platform and the relevant add-ons. With a blog host, a blogger is freed from the duty of installing, configuring and maintaining the modules that make up the backend of the blog.

To summarise the blogging process: A blogger creates content using the client, the prepared content is uploaded to a blog host which contains an installed copy of the blogging platform. The blogging platform fuses the content with the rest of the Web page, which has the relevant code that controls the layout and features of the blog. The completed page is then published on the Web server and is available online.

1.7 Blogging Clients

Blogging clients exist in two flavours, there are those that exist online like blogger.com—you can prepare your blog using them, but you need to be online to do it. All blogging platforms have a client embedded.

Then there are clients in the form of stand-alone applications like Flock which allow you to create the blog post offline, but you need to be online to publish the post to the blog site (similar to creating and sending an e-mail using e-mail clients like Thunderbird). Flock, by the way, is also an able browser based on the Mozilla engine which also powers Firefox. Using Flock is described later in this chapter.

1.8 Blogging Platforms And Hosts

The Blogging Platform is the core of the blog's structure. All aspects of a blog, except the post content, are controlled by the platform. This ranges from the page colour and layout, to the way in which the posts are stored and retrieved. While all platforms include a blog client, which can only be used when the blogger is online; they do not come with the host bundled. This is contrary to common perception. Many platforms, especially those that are the result of the Open Source movement are freely downloadable. A user can install and configure the platform to work on a host.

There are many blogging platforms, and selection of one has to be in the light of the knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of each. The popular blogging platforms include Blogger, Moveable Type, WordPress, TypePad, LiveJournal. etc.

Of these, WordPress and Moveable Type are freely downloadable. Moveable Type which is free for personal use is not available freely hosted—even with feature limitations. While

Blogger—the platform—is not freely available, it can be freely used at blogger.com. Confused? To add to it, there are blog hosts offering custom blog platforms who offer their services for free, like blogdrive.com. In such cases it is difficult to distinguish between the platform and the host. In most cases such free services are ad-supported, meaning you will have the host's ads on your blog page.

Needless to say, the platforms also differ in the features offered. Deliberation is required before selecting a blogging platform not only because of the feature differences, but also because if a change of mind were to occur later, shifting the posts from one platform to another will be an arduous task.

The options available to a blogger range from the all-for-free setup offered by Google.com, in the form of its blogger.com-blogspot.com platform-host combo; to the nothing-for-free, Enterprise Moveable Type platform hosted on a paid Web host which requires a person with Web server administration and Perl/MySQL knowledge to manage the blog. Depending on the nature of the blog—personal or organisational, and the object of blogging—hobby or professional, the choice of platform will vary.

In any case it is advisable to try out all platforms by signing up for free accounts or free trial accounts. The platforms which offer a free version for personal use can be downloaded and installed on your PC (along with other requirements like a Web server and other add-ons) or can be uploaded to free web hosts online. Based on the experience with configuring the blog and using it, the platform can be decided upon. Nonetheless, it is important to note there is no relation between the price of the blogging environment and the popularity of the blog. Many freely hosted and created blogs are popular.

1.9 Choosing A Blogging Platform And Host

To understand what features constitute a good platform it is best to revert to our earlier discussion on making the most of the blogosphere as a visitor. We can conclude that the following features can be considered as visitor friendly:

1. **Font Characteristics:** Fonts should be large enough so that the visitors do not have to squint to read the content. Font colours for normal text and links should be such as to allow sufficient contrast with the background.
2. **Page Style:** Garishly coloured pages are a put off; not many like to read red text off a bright yellow page. But if the mood of the blogger is a happy one, using a gloomy grey would also make it difficult to connect with the reader.
3. **Page Layout:** The reading experience should not be marred by an obstructive layout. Inserting ads right in the middle of the post text is generally a bad idea, as is the practice of using a very narrow post column leading to lot of scrolling. Having links to important pages at the very bottom of a long page is as good as not having them at all.
4. **Page Content:** Extraneous content can be blighting. While ads are a conspicuous bloat, there are other less noticeable irritants. A blog can be bogged down by the number of comments posted by visitors. A page containing a two-sentence post followed by 100 comments will take time to load, testing the visitor's patience. Visitors to the site are more interested in what the blogger has to say. SPAM messages that are not promptly weed-out from the comments leave a bad impression. A page containing 10 posts will not only take time to load, but also will increase the time taken to dig down to the interesting post. Having one page per post would preclude this effort.

Putting up large images or links to them without offering a

preview is also a bad idea. It is better to put a smaller version of the original image on the blog page, with a link to the larger original image.

5. **Visitor Aids:** Visitors should have easy access to links to bookmark the blog, for example to sites like del.icio.us. They should also be given a chance to subscribe to the blogs feeds so that they can remain updated about changes to it. Visitors appreciate the ability to voice their opinion about the blog through the comment box. They should not be made to wade through all the posts in search of a specific entry. Posts need to be tagged/categorised relevant to their content. A search box which saves a lot of effort for the visitor is a must, especially if there are a lot of posts. Easy access to previous posts or preferably a calendar showing the dates in which the blogger has made a post is also recommended.
6. **Optionals:** A blog is best known by the blogroll it keeps, (just as a person is best known by the company he keeps). Linking to other blogs also keeps the visitor exploring the blogosphere. But caution needs to be exercised when it comes to linking to other blogs in the post—in some cases, the habit could lead to a frustrating experience to the reader, if the actual source of the information is one click too far away. So rather than add one more link to an already long chain of blog links, it is better to link to the actual source of information—even if you were led to it through another blog.

Besides bookmarking sites, easy posting to community editing sites like Digg.com is also a plus. Offering a link that allows the post to be emailed is recommended. An “About me” page offering information about the blogger would offer a face to the content.

From the above we can conclude about the features that a blogging platform should support. These are:

1. **Range of template options:** The template controls the page colour, page layout, and font characteristics. The default template need not be to everyone's taste, but having a range of options ensures some level of customisation.
2. **Ease of template modifications:** Bloggers conversant with HTML/CSS should have the freedom to tweak the code of a template to create a unique layout.
3. **Ease of layout modification:** The position of various items on the page—calendar, search box, comment box, blogroll etc.—should be easily customisable.
4. **Comment regulation:** Regulating comments ensures that only those approved by the blogger are displayed, comments should be held in abeyance till the blogger reviews them. Some bloggers may not be keen to have any comments—in such cases disabling comments should be possible.
5. **Ease of uploading pictures (at least):** It is much easier to describe the fun of a picnic with a picture rather than a page full of verbosity. Pictures should not be displayed as is on the main page, rather an optimised version which acts as a link to the original image should be included.
6. **Tagging/Categorising Capability, Search Utility:** Both will help visitors get to relevant posts fast.
7. **RSS/Atom Feeds:** To allow visitors to be updated of changes without visiting the site.
8. **Posting Parameters:** The number of posts to put on a page, allocating a permalink per post, etc. are all aspects that influence a visitor's experience.
9. **Ability to add external code:** The most popular way to make money on the net is to have visitors to a site click on ads. If the

platform does not allow to insertion of additional code in the form of ads, you won't be making any money.

It is essential for a Net businessperson to be able to classify visitors. Site tracking scripts need to be inserted in the template code so that visitors' actions on the site can be observed. This information would be useful to improve site layout. External code also includes that which makes it possible to post the link to digg.com or del.icio.us.

10. Pinging blog trackers: Unless tracking sites are pinged with every new post, they will not turn up in search results.

Needless to say, a professional blogger should invest in learning at least the basics of relevant coding languages or have someone with the required knowledge at his disposal. This would come in handy to make modifications to the template code. While dedicated blog hosts would be willing to extend support, it would sometimes be necessary to make modifications to the platform yourself.

Additionally, in case where the blogger intends to use one of the free platforms with a paid or free Web host, it is expected of the blogger to upload and configure the platform on the server, besides handling any glitches that occur from time to time. Since most platforms are coded in PHP/Perl and use some form of database like MySQL in the backend to store the site contents, knowledge of how to integrate the modules of the blog to work seamlessly will be critical to its proper functioning.

1.10 Reviews

A brief review of a few of the popular blogging platforms follows. At the onset, it needs to be clarified that this review is limited by two aspects: money and knowhow. Only platforms that offer at least a free trial, and do not require extensive knowledge of database/Web server administration have been reviewed.

1.10.1 Blogger

Blogger—the platform—was the creation of Pyra Labs, which was later bought by Google. After the buyout, Blogger was offered as a totally free blogging service at blogger.com by Google (Pyra Labs offered the service in two variants with only the paid version offering all the features). Blogger.com only forms the client and platform part of the blog, the blog needs to be hosted on a server. While Google will be glad to host the blog for you at blogspot.com (your blog site will be xyz.blogspot.com), you are free to configure blogger to publish the blog on another server. Interestingly, blogger.com will post to any ordinary Web host and doesn't require any add-ons like a database etc.

Google has successfully integrated few of its other services with blogger.com. Users of blogger.com can easily include Google AdSense ads to make money from the blog. It is also possible to blog from Google Docs and Spreadsheets.

You need to sign up with blogger.com to be able to use the client. Blogger offers two client options—the classic and the updated. The updated client offers greater customisation options compared to the classic one. After sign up you are given the option to choose where to host the blog. In case you would like to host the blog elsewhere the details have to be provided in the “Advanced Blog Setup” at this stage. Blogger.com uses FTP or Secure FTP to transfer the files to the server, so these details need to be entered in the relevant fields. In all other cases, the blog is hosted at blogspot.com, you need to choose a unique name for the blog before you can proceed.

In the next step you are given a rash of templates to choose from. This can be changed or tweaked later on. After the template selection, your blog is ready. Just like that. You can visit the blog immediately, but there would be nothing else there besides the title.

The Client

The Blogger “client” allows you to add a post. The capable text edi-



The Blogger Client

tor allows basic formatting of text, and allows adding pictures. Labels are a way of organising your posts. All posts tagged with the same label can be quickly retrieved by the visitor, by clicking on the label link. Categorising your posts is recommended. If the formatting options provided are not adequate, the client also allows modifying the underlying HTML code.

The Platform

All other modifications to the blog are possible by interacting with the platform. The platform influences system wide aspects that affect all posts of a blog, like page layout, page colour, font colour, adding additional scripts—like AdSense ads, RSS feeds, pinging blog trackers etc.



blogger platform options

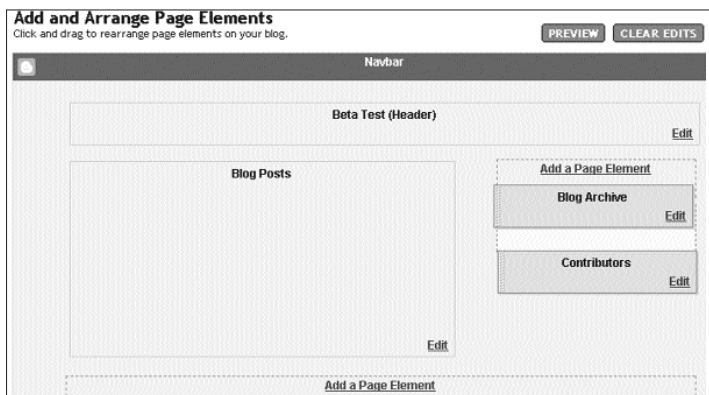
Under the Template tab, you can see the pre-built templates on offer at blogger.com—there are about 30 options. The Page Elements link allows changing the layout of the blog by simple click and drag. Additional elements can be added to the blog—for the choices available, you can click on the Add a Page Element link. Some useful choices are the Link List element, which can be used to add a Blogroll; the AdSense element can be useful for those planning to make money from their blog; the Labels element will show the list of labels associated with your posts, enabling a visitor to quickly access similar posts; and, the HTML/JavaScript element can be used to add additional code, like a link to bookmark at del.icio.us or a link to Google analytics—a user tracking service from Google, which offers a lot of information about visitors to the site.

Fonts and their colours can be changed under the Fonts and Colors Link. For those whom these options are not adequate can achieve even greater customisation by editing the HTML code by clicking on the Edit HTML link.

While the Template Tab provides options related to the blog appearance, the settings tab presents the options regarding the features of the blog.

Under The Settings Tab

The “Basic” link, besides other self explanatory settings, allows you to enable a link making it easier for a visitor to send the post to some email address. It is recommended to enable this “Show Email Post Link” option. To prevent your blog from appearing in search results, you can disable the “Add your blog to our listings?” option. Doing so only prevents random access to your blog, people who know the URL of the blog can directly access it.



Blogger page element setting

Under Publish Link, you can choose where to post the blog. Hosting at an external server has a price—it can be done only if a “classic” template is being used. The updated client created template customisation cannot be carried over to an external webhost. If you intend to host the blog elsewhere, bearing this in mind will save a lot of time in wasted template customisation.

Weblogs is a service which tracks blogs. People visit weblogs to track the new blogs or latest post in a blog. Updating Weblogs is recommended.

Under the Formatting link, you can choose the number of posts to be shown on each page. Keeping a very high number will increase the page size and the loading times. While having all posts on a page will reduce the amount of link clicking required, routine visitors to the blog will prefer not to wait for the entire page to load just to read the latest post. The “Show Link Field” option will show the blogroll, so let this remain enabled.

Under the Comments link, you can set the comment moderation options. Backlinking is an indicator of a post’s popularity. It is best left enabled. Word Verification is a filter to prevent automated entry of comments, mostly spam. Enabling this will curb such activity.

Under the Archiving link you will find the option to allocate a webpage per post. This is recommended since visitors can easily get to a desired post without having to read through other posts on the page.

Under the Site Feed link, you can configure the RSS feeds of the blog. For more options click on the “Switch to Advanced Mode” link. You can set the size of the feed for the blog and its comments too. Customised text can be added to each feed, and this could include any ads that you would like to display. By allowing ads in feeds, Blogger has ensured that the blogger does not have to be deprived of earning opportunities by offering the entire post as RSS.

Under the Email link, you will find a nifty little feature—the Mail-to-blogger Address is an e-mail address which can be used to post to the blog without visiting blogger.com. All e-mails sent to that address are published. If you would like the emailed post to remain as a draft only, clear the check next to the “Publish”

option. The Blogsend address is the e-mail ID to which every blog post is sent to. Enabling this is recommended since it is always a good idea to keep a backup of all your posts.

Under the Permissions link, you can decide to limit the access to the blog. Again, this feature will work only if the blog is hosted at blogspot.com. In case of a multi user blog, you can add users either as a guest who can only contribute posts, or as an admin who has equal rights as yourself. Moblogging is also supported, though at present this is limited to users based in the US.

Concluding Remarks

Blogger is a capable platform, which offers all features required to operate a blog. It is probably the only blog host which does not hold back from giving free users the entire array of features of the platform. The inclusion of AdSense makes blogger.com a feasible platform for those planning to earn money from the blog as well.

1.10.2 Wordpress

Wordpress is an open source blogging platform. It is available freely hosted at wordpress.com, where you can create a blog right away, and the platform code is available for download at wordpress.org, which is its development site. If you are well versed with PHP, MySQL and Web server administration, you can roll your own WordPress blog by downloading the WordPress setup files from Wordpress.org, and uploading them to a Web server. WordPress is free for non commercial use; the rest can use the freely hosted version at wordpress.com. While the blog platform is not feature limited, the blog host has limitations for the free version. What follows is the review of the features of WordPress as it is available at wordpress.com.

To be able to try WordPress (WP), you need to signup for a free account at wordpress.com. After signing up and selecting a unique name for the blog, you are taken to the blog's dashboard. Here you can see the various activities that you can do with the blog. The blog statistics offers information about the visitors to your blog,

The screenshot displays the WordPress client interface for creating a new post. At the top, there is a 'Title' field. Below it is the 'Post' section, which includes a rich text editor and a toolbar with buttons for bold (b), italic (i), link, quote, delete (del), insert (ins), image (img), unordered list (ul), ordered list (ol), link (li), code, more, lookup, and Close Tags. The rich text editor is a large, empty text area. Below the editor are three buttons: 'Save and Continue Editing', 'Save', and 'Publish'. At the bottom, there is a tabbed interface with 'Upload', 'Browse All', and 'Video' tabs. The 'Upload' tab is active, showing a 'File' input field, a 'Choose...' button, and a list of supported file types: jpg, jpeg, png, gif, pdf, doc, ppt only.

Wordpress client

and the Feed statistics does the same to the subscribers of your site's RSS feed. Besides individual blog statistics, the dash board also keeps track of your activities across the wordpress.com blogosphere. The comments you made on another blog are tracked under the "My comments" link. The Tag Surfer link allows you to be informed every time anyone with a WP blog posts under that tag.

The Client

The contents under the write tab effectively form the WP client. On offer is a basic text editor, which also allows basic formatting. You can add a link to an online image from the editor itself. Below the editor is the file uploading box, which can be used to upload images and other files like Word documents, PowerPoint presentations, etc., to your blog. Video blogging, by using clips uploaded to YouTube and Google.com are also supported. The video clip is displayed on the WP blog page, even though the data is transferred from YouTube or Google.com. The free service only allows 50MB storage space for all non-text data. For more, you need to get a paid account.

Categorisation is important as it allows the visitors to easily access related posts. A blog entry can be categorised or new categories can be added on the right hand panel.

WP also allows you to create special pages that are not part of the blog. These pages appear as links on the right hand side of the blog page. Under the manage tab, the previous posts and pages can be modified. You can also manage the various non textual data that you have uploaded here. Of special interest in this tab is the Import Tab. Here you can import your posts from blogs written in other blogging platforms like Moveable Type, TypePad, LiveJournal and the older version of Blogger.com, besides WP itself. Under the export tab you can prepare your blog contents for export to another or WP blog.

The Platform



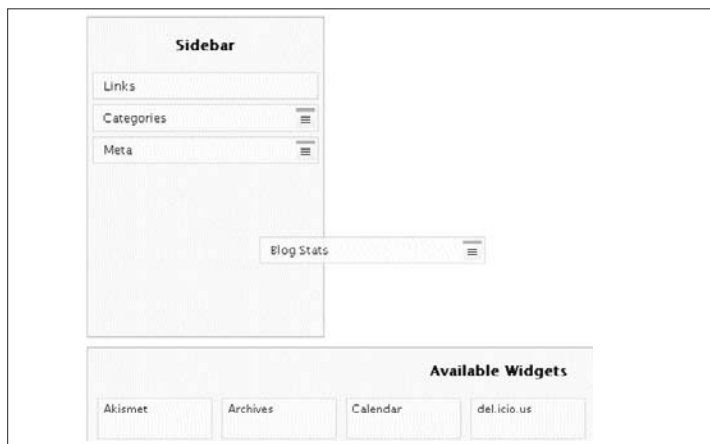
Wordpress Dashboard

A look at the menu and you can correctly conclude that WordPress offers more customisation options and features than Blogger. For starters, there are 53 themes to choose from under the Presentation tab. For those knowing CSS, the paid version of WP allows the use of a custom CSS file. Free service users cannot use a custom CSS file, but the effects can be previewed. Editing the HTML is not allowed, though. So adding external code in the form of ads or scripts cannot be achieved. Selection of a template will influence certain aspects of the layout, most notably Sidebars. Since widgets can only be added to sidebars (described later), if you intend to use them, choose a template which supports at least a two column layout. A brief template description follows every template.

Under the Sidebar Widgets tab, the user can change the contents displayed on sidebar of the blog page. Available widgets include Calendar, Blog stats, RSS feeds, pictures from your Flickr account etc. All it takes to include widgets is a click and drag operation. Each of the widgets can be configured further by clicking on Configure. It needs to be noted that some of these widgets, like Flickr and del.icio.us, rely on external sites for their functionality.

For these widgets, proper configuration is imperative for flawless operation. Additionally, these add to the size of your blog page increasing the loading time, which may not be visitor friendly.

The Calendar, Categories, Meta and Links widgets are recommended as they are relevant to the visitor.



Wordpress Widget Placement

Use the Blogroll tab to create your blogroll. This can sometimes work in mysterious ways depending on the choice of the template. In some templates, to see these links on the blog page, you need to add Links widget in the sidebar, and put all blogroll links in a “blogroll” category, after you have created it. In other templates this additional step was unnecessary.

You can add users and administrators to your blog under the Users tab. Here, you can also send invites to any person to join your blog (or create their own blog). A word of caution: setting up someone as an admin grants him all the rights as enjoyed by the creator of the blog—including deleting other admins.

Under the Options tab, you have even more customisation options. Under the General link, you can prevent visitors who are

not registered WP users from commenting on your blog. Under the Reading link, you can choose the first page of your blog, either a static page or the latest post. Here you can also set the number of posts to be displayed on a page. The Syndication feeds controls the RSS feeds generated by the blog. You can set the number of posts to be sent when someone subscribes to the feed, and whether the entire post or just a summary should be sent.

Under Discussion options you can configure the Comment Moderation options. While moderation will prevent irrelevant comments, the ensuing delay would not be to the liking of those putting in legitimate comments.

Under the Privacy options you can limit the visibility of the blog. If so desired, you can keep the blog private so that only you can read it. The Free version of WP limits the number of users that can view a blog to 35 users. Abstaining from getting listed in search engines does not make the blog private. People who know the URL can directly get to it.

Under the Domain link you can setup a private domain to point to your WP blog. The free version does not allow this. This redirection is not the same as publishing on a different server, as is possible with blogger.com.

Under the Comments tab, you can view comments and moderate them before publishing them online.

Concluding Comments

A major drawback of WP is the inability to add custom HTML. This prevents inclusion of links to bookmark your site. You will also not be able to add additional scripts like Google AdSense to the blog. No doubt this considerably reduces its attractiveness among professional bloggers.

Irrespective of the lacunae, WP comes off as a more feature rich platform. Allowing easier posting of images, videos and other

file types is a major advantage. The blog and Feeds statistics page are the icing on the cake. For a hobbyist, WP is the only choice.

Besides Wordpress.com, there are other hosts offering Wordpress freely, like weblogs.us, okayblog.net, blogthing.com, blogates.com, etc. There are also many that offer custom WordPress templates which can be downloaded and installed if your host allows it.

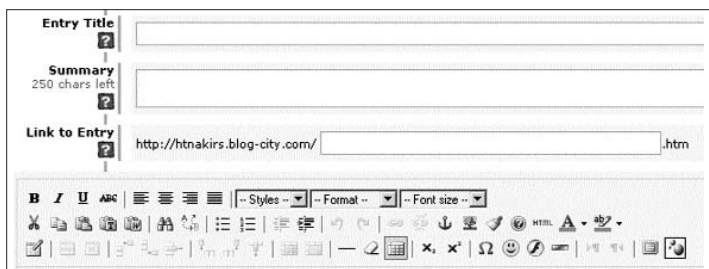
1.10.3 Blog-city.com

Blog-city.com is a feature laden blogging platform and host. The free version has a few limitations—2000 posts, 500 MB monthly data transfer, besides out of bounds features.

You need to sign up before you can blog. During the sign up process, you are given a clutch of template options which can also be modified later on.

The Client

After logging in, use the “blog it” link to add a post to your blog. The customary text editor in this case is supplemented with a few additional buttons. Notably, the “insert Flash Movie” button which allows you to insert any flash animation in the blog; the “Insert Table” button which makes it easier to insert a table; and, the “Media Browser” button which allows you to embed videos from You tube or pictures from Flickr. The editor also grants you the freedom to name the page as you choose.



Blogcity Client

Under the “Entries” link you can view the statistics of the previous posts and edit or Delete selected ones. Besides the Blog posts, you can also create and edit “LinkBlogs”—which Blogcity (BC) defines as posts containing other links. BC facilitates the creation of Link blog by offering a browser button which can be used from any site to send a link to be included in the Link Blog. Additionally, BC supports syndication of the Link Blog also (for paid users only).

The Platform

Under the “Look and Feel” link, you can change the layout and features of the post. The main blog widgets can be dragged and dropped to change their location. Those which are not needed can be removed from the page.

Clicking on the widget box will take you to its configuration page, where changes can be made. BC supports about 48 widgets (including the “Tag Cloud” which is visible on the blog page, a neat scripting trick where the size and strength of the font varies with the number of entries filed under it) and to add more click on the “add new Widget” Link. As expected, some of them are out of bounds for free service users, as is the ability to tweak with the header and footer part of every post. The Blog Entry Widget link, which is open only to paid users, allows inclusion of external code like Google ads.

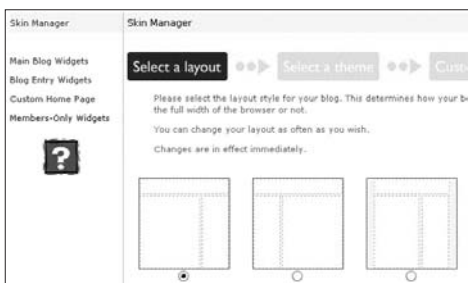
The “Custom Home Page” link also allows changing layout of the first page, but the whole range of options is only available to paid users. Some changes that can be made are akin to that possible with the Main Blog Widget link.

The Skin Manager Link takes you to the main layout tweaking tool. This is a three step process, where in the first step you choose



Blogcity Page Elements

the number and layout of the columns, in the second step you choose the Theme, and in the last step you can further changes the fonts and colours and pictures of the layout. If all that were not enough, BC also lets you edit the underlying CSS code.



Blogcity Page Layout Selection

Under the Settings link you can change the features of the blog. The “Blog entry options” link offers some handy settings under the “Links to third party sites” heading. Here you can set up the buttons which will allow easy posting to digg.com, del.icio.us etc. The “Blog site Profile” link lets you control whether to list your blog in BC’s directory. The “RSS Options” link lets you configure the options related to the feeds your blog generates.

The options under “Entry Categories”, “Security Zone”, “Email-2-Blog Options” and “Incoming News Feeds” are available only for paid users. Disabling categorisation of posts for Free users severely reduces the attractiveness of the otherwise excellent feature list. Also, only paid customers can maintain a multi-author blog.

Under the Extras Link, you can find a few more nifty tools. The Bookmarklets link provides you with browser buttons that facilitate inserting links of those sites you visit in the blog. The File Space link lets you upload files to the blog. A miserly limit of 1 MB is applied for free users, though.



Blogcity Easy Links

Concluding Remarks

The only drawback about betting on the new horse is you never know if it can run the distance. The same risk applies to relatively unknown hosts, the time spent blogging at these sites may come cropper if the site were to close down unexpectedly. Nonetheless, the features offered by blog-city.com give it a good chance to thrive.

1.10.4 LiveJournal

Livejournal is an open source blogging platform which forms the basis of the Livejournal.com site. Originally created by Danga Software, this was bought by Six Apart, a company that also develops the blogging platform Moveable Type and runs Typepad.com.

Unlike other blogging platforms discussed, Livejournal has a strong social networking flavour with terms like “friends” and “community” given prominence on the site. We shall be focusing on the blogging platform only. While seemingly lightweight in comparison to Blogger and WordPress, LiveJournal (LJ) has a few tricks up its sleeve.

To create a blog you need to sign up on the site. LJ offers three types of services, of which the most features are available for the Paid one. Of the other two free services the one offering most features (called “Plus”) is selected by default, when you sign up. This one is ad supported, so you have to pay the “price” for the additional features. The other free version, called Basic, is ad-free.

Once you are logged in, the Journal Tab on the top banner reveals all operations you can do with the blog.

The Client

The Post Entry and Edit Entry link under the Journal tab form the LJ client. The text box by default shows the HTML editor, which means you can directly put in HTML code. In case you are not well-versed with HTML, you can type in as usual and LJ will automatically format the text with the relevant HTML notation. This auto-formatting can be disabled also. You can switch to the more famil-

The screenshot shows a web interface titled "Poll Creator". It is divided into two main sections: "Poll Properties" and "Poll Questions".

Poll Properties

- "Who can view this poll?" with a dropdown menu set to "All".
- "Who can vote in this poll?" with a dropdown menu set to "All".
- "Poll Name: (opt.)" with a text input field.

Poll Questions

Below this section is a button labeled "Insert question here:" with a dropdown arrow and an "Insert" button next to it.

Question #1 - Check Boxes

Under this heading, there is a "Question:" label followed by a text input field. Below that is an "Options:" label followed by a list of two options, each with a checkbox.

Live Journal's Poll Tool

iar Rich Text Editor by clicking on that link. In this mode, the normal text formatting options are seen. Inserting pictures is easy, and other options like comment moderation and access control can also be set right here. Clicking on the Post to.. button will publish the post. Live Journal also supports Moblogging.

One memorable distinction when compared with Blogger and WordPress is the ease with which a poll can be included in the blog. The Poll tool can be accessed on the right sidebar. Once all the required poll questions and options have been inserted, clicking on the See Code button will show the tags that make up the poll. Clicking on the post poll button inserts the code into the post, and you are done. If you would like to add additional text to the post above or below the poll questions, it is best to do it after the poll code has been inserted into the post. The Create a Poll Link always creates a new post.

The Platform

To modify any platform parameters, use the "Edit Journal Style" under the Journal tab. The options here are severely limited when compared to Blogger and Wordpress. Additionally, certain other options are only available for paid users.

Feature Comparison

	Blogger	WordPress	Blog-city	Live Journal	Xanga
Versions	free	free/paid	free/paid	free/paid	free/paid
Templates	about 30	53	layout options : 10 theme options : 42	33	8
file types supported	images	images,docs, pdf, links to Youtube, Google Video	image, flash animation, links to You tube, Flickr	images,	images, audio, video
edit css	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
edit html	yes	no	no	yes, paid only	yes, limited editing only.
Compatibility with Flock	yes	yes	no	yes	no
comment moderation	yes	yes	yes	yes	no, comments can be switched off
privacy settings	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
links to digg, delicio.us	yes, code can be inserted in HTML	no	yes, interface supported	no	yes, code can be entered
posting by email	yes	no	yes, paid only	yes, paid only	yes, paid only
RSS feeds	yes	yes	yes	yes, but links are hidden.	no, Xanga has its own subscription service.
Feed customisation	yes	yes	yes	no	no
hosting to external server	yes	no, but redirection is possible	no	no	no
tags/categories, search	yes, yes	yes, yes	yes, yes	yes, no	yes, yes
special features	unrestricted platform features	blog and feed statistics	statistics,(paid only), most feature rich client	poll creator	archiving, paid users can download archives.

Basics Look and Feel Custom Options Advanced

Journal Titles

Journal Title:

Subtitle:

Friends Page Title:

Link List

Many S2 layouts can display [your link list](#). Once you've set it up, you can display it in your journal by turning on the "Display Link List" custom option in your layout.

Style System

LiveJournal provides two style systems that allow you varying control over how your journal is displayed:

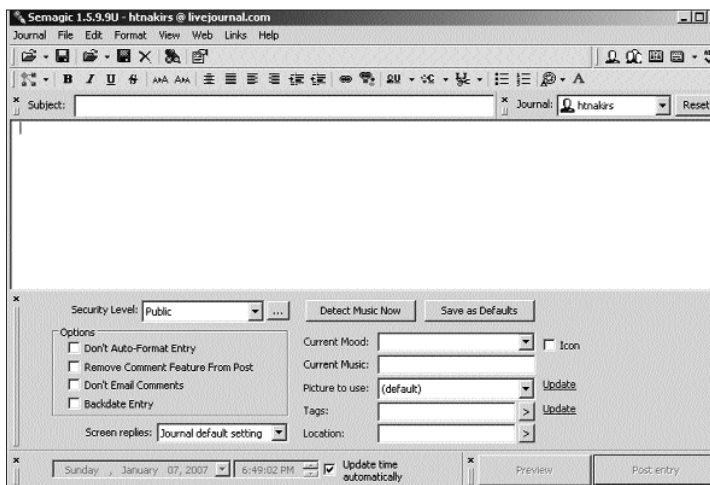
- ☐ S1 - For users who are comfortable with HTML and CSS.
- ☒ S2 - For users who don't know HTML or CSS, or make only minor alterations.

Live Journal's platform options

Under the Basic tab, you can set the Style System to match your knowledge of HTML. Setting it to S2 level initially is recommended; without that, the available template options are not shown. Under the Look and Feel link, you can set your Layout and Theme options. Clicking on the Samples link will show the 33 templates that are on offer. Certain themes are only available to paid users.

Under the Custom Options link you can further tweak the blog appearance. Of special interest under the Presentation link is the "Display Link List" option which shows the blogroll, and the field to enter the code for an external Web counter. You can also set the number of posts to be shown per page. Under the Colours link, you can set the desired colours for the blog, the Font link allows changing the default fonts for the blog, the Images link allows you to set an image as the blog background, while the Text field lets you rename the titles of each subheading occurring on the blog. The Custom CSS link lets you specify a CSS file for customised display options.

You can also use a standalone blogging client to post to live journal. LJ offers a link to such clients on the right sidebar on the Post entry page. Semagic is one such client. Besides adding a post,



Live Journal's standalone client

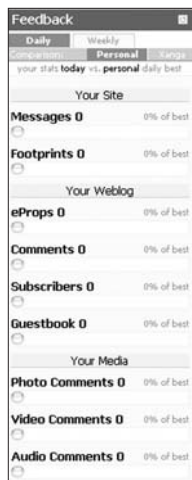
it also allows you to set different parameters associated with the post like tagging, privacy settings, comment settings etc.

Concluding comments

The nagging ads are a major drawback of this service, especially since Blogger and WordPress offer more without the ads. But LJ's popularity is not based on just its blogging platform but the bundle of services on offer at the site, which includes the Social networking tools like an IM client and other features that help acquaintances to keep in touch.

1.10.5 Xanga.com

Xanga.com is an ad-driven free blogging service, with a social networking inclination like LiveJournal. The paid version is free of ads and offers a few additional features. If the ads can be overlooked, Xanga stands out because it offers a combined platform for Text, Audio and Video blogging.



Xanga Stats

On successful signup you are allocated three URLs: xanga.com/xyz, video.xanga.com /xyz and audio.xanga.com/xyz (where xyz is your username) for each of the media types. Once you are signed in you are taken to the Xanga dashboard. The right side bar of the dashboar shows your blog statistics.

The Client

The dashboard lists the posts to the blog—to add a new entry, click on “New Entry”. This will take you to the usual text editor which has offers all the common formatting features. The presence of the Video and Audio tabs is what distinguishes this editor. Using these tabs you can upload any audio or video file to Xanga, and they are posted in your audio, video blog respectively, along with the main text blog. Xanga lets you upload 100 MB per month and store a total of 1 GB of data under the free plan.

The Platform

The Settings tab lets you configure the Platform. The “Setup Wizard” lets you change the template. The options are limited to 8, but those with HTML/CSS knowledge can use a custom layout.

The “Look and Feel” link takes you to a page where all the possible changes to the page can be made. Xanga lets you add external code in the form of JavaScript and HTML. This can be used to add links to del.icio.us, or Google ads (though it would not “stand out” among the other ads already present). Making changes to the Xanga skins and adding a custom module is out of bounds for free users.

Xanga supports Privacy in the form of a blocked user list and a Protected Posting list. The blocked user list can be used to prevent few users from accessing the site, while allowing the rest; and the Protected Posting list can



Xanga Platform
Options

be used to allow certain people access to the blog, and restrict the rest.

Xanga is the only one of the blog hosts here that allowed a backup of the posts to be made. Free users are limited to online backups, while paid users can download the backups.

Concluding Remarks

While Xanga offers just as much as Live Journal, the fact that the choice of templates is limited makes it comparatively unattractive. The user cannot be expected to make up for this shortfall by creating his own templates with knowledge of HTML and CSS. Xanga is not targeted at a serious blogger, rather to a community blogger. The site, like LiveJournal, offers blogging as another activity to be shared with acquaintances.

1.10.6 Other Platforms and Hosts

Movable Type

This is a proprietary blogging platform from the owners of Live Journal—Six Apart. Since free hosted versions are not available, we cannot offer a first hand review. However, the platform is free for personal use and can be freely downloaded, but needs to be installed on a Web server and configured to work along with Perl and MySQL before it can be used. This cannot be done without relevant knowledge of PHP, MySQL and Web server administration. Six Apart offers the hosted version of Moveable Type at Typepad.com, but here a free Trial is available only after signing up with Credit Card details.

Moveable Type is regarded as an excellent blogging platform. A list of features is available here: <http://www.sixapart.com/movabletype/versions-and-features.html>. It can be downloaded here: <http://www.sixapart.com/movabletype/pricing.html>.

If you are serious about finding an ideal blogging platform, it would be behoved of you to test Moveable Type before coming to a conclusion. You can use one of the many free webhosts that support MySQL and Perl to test the platform.

Greymatter

Greymatter is an open source blogging platform that is no longer being developed by the creator, but it is being supported by a group of contributors. A free hosted version of this platform is available at memebot.com, and the platform can be downloaded at <http://web.petefinnigan.com/greymatter.htm>.

It is not as user friendly or feature rich as the other platforms available, and even the slightest change in the template requires the knowledge of HTML, and RSS feeds or categorisation are not supported. But, it will appeal to those who are looking for a spartan layout, without any frills and features.

Geeklog

Another open source blogging platform, but we were unable to come across a free host offering this. The feature list is available here: <http://www.geeklog.net/docs/>. The platform can be downloaded here: <http://www.geeklog.net/filemgmt/viewcat.php?cid=8>

Drupal

Drupal is a full fledged CMS that can also be used as a blogging platform. Much like installing a blog platform on a server, CMS packages also need to be installed and configured. Drupal's features and download locations are available at Drupal.org.

A few other blog hosts that caught our attention include blogdrive.com (free and paid), tblog.com (free), squarespace.com (paid with free trial) and upsaid.com (paid with free trial). It needs to be mentioned that almost all portals include a blog section for its users, including yahoo, MSN, rediff etc.

1.11 Offline Blogging Clients

There are many offline blogging clients available, like Thingamablog, Semagic (which works only for Live Journal), SharpMT (which works only with blogs based on Moveable Type) etc. We shall review Flock because of its user friendliness and versatility.

1.11.1 Flock

Flock is an excellent client when it comes to posting to blogs hosted at blogspot.com, wordpress.com, livejournal.com and typepad.com. Besides these, it can also post to blogs based on the Movable Type, Drupal, Blogger, Atom and Metaweblog platforms. This is another reason to stick to the popular blogging platforms. Flock can post to more than one blog, though not at the same time.

Configuration

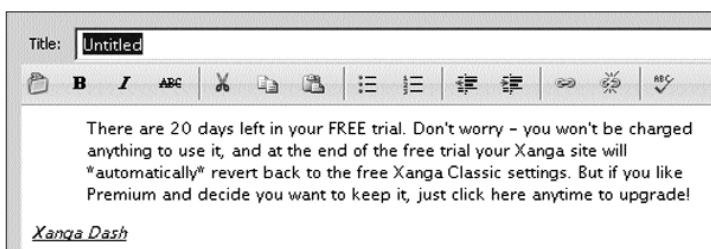
The first time you run Flock after installation, it will ask you details about your blog. Enter the URL of the blog (with the “http://”), and the username and password and you are set. To add more blogs, you can click on the Tools, Accounts and Settings Menu. The steps are the same. Flock will, by default, update technorati.com every time you make a new post.

Using Flock

The beauty of flock lies in the right click. Any text, image, webpage can be posted to the blog, with or without your comments with a right click. Selecting a block of text and right clicking



Flock makes posting easy on it will show the “blog this” option in the context menu. Selecting it will pop up a text editor where you can add a title or additional text, and then click on Publish.



Flock's Blog Client

You can choose the blog to which the content has to be published along with any category or tags to be associated with the entry or any other options as specified by you in the blog in the next step.

Clicking on Publish then posts the contents to the blog. Enabling the “Visit the blog after Publishing” option will take you to the blog after the post is published. Images, links can be similarly blogged. As a safety mechanism, Flock will also store a copy of the post locally.

If you are only seeking to type out a post, this can be done from the New Blog Post option under the File menu. The Open Blog Post option takes you to the previously stored blog posts published through Flock.



Flock's Blog Parameters

1.12 Offline RSS Readers

Creating a stand alone blog and expecting it to be successful is a pipe dream. The extent of cross linking which you do with the blog is crucial to its success. And to cross link, you should be devoting time reading other blogs! While visiting each blog can be tedious, it has to be done as an exploratory exercise to discover new, interesting blogs. Once you come across a blog sub-

scribing to its RSS feed will allow you to be updated about the latest posts as and when they are published. This saves you a lot of trouble.

RSS feeds can be accessed by using a class of applications called feed readers. One popular, free feed reader is Abilon. Surprisingly, Flock presents itself as a worthy contender among feed readers also.

1.12.1 Flock And RSS

To subscribe to any site's feed, just click on the RSS/Atom Feed link when browsing with Flock. This will cause Flock's inbuilt feed reader to launch. Clicking on the Subscribe button will store the site address, so the next time you need not visit the site—clicking on the My News option under the tools menu will suffice.

While there are no settings to regulate the frequency with which Flock checks a site for updates, everytime you access the My News menu, the feeds list is updated, and new feeds are displayed.

Underlining its utility as a blogging client, Flock also allows you to post any interesting RSS feed to YOUR blog by clicking on the “blog” link that appears below every post.

1.13 Blogging Mods

Blogs are one dimensional—with the number of posts listed over time being the only dimension. Consider a situation where you would like to edit a post you made over a month back. Using the existing blogging platforms, it is not possible to retain the previous version. Such a feature is intrinsic to a wiki.

A Wiki is a special form of Web page which allows its contents to be edited by anybody. Because of this feature, a Wiki keeps track

of all versions of a document, in case the latest edition is erroneous and a previous version needs to be restored immediately. That feature would be of much use in a blog since it would allow one to view the changes that have been made to a blog post over time, in a way reflecting the changing perceptions of the blogger. Also in case of organisational blogs, rather than having many authors creating separate posts, a wiki will allow a single collaborative post.

Enter the Bliki also called Wikiblog. A bliki is a two dimensional blog, the second dimension being the editions/versions of each post.

Much like blogging platforms, wiki platforms are also distinct from the wiki host. While Wikis are not within the scope of this chapter, we shall briefly review a free bliki service so as to offer a glimpse of the possibilities.

There are many free bliki hosts available on the net; the subject of this review is atwiki.com

1.13.1 Atwiki.com

You need to sign up to be able to start on a bliki at atwiki.com. After signup you are taken to your bliki. The first thing you notice is the presence of three tabs on the right. The history tab is what brings in the second dimension to a bliki.



History Tab

The three tabs are omnipresent. The “Add a New page” is used to make a new post, the “Edit this page” Tab is used to edit the page and the history tab lists all the changes that have been made to that page. A text editor facilitates the editing and creating

process, and you have the option to use an HTML editor or a Wiki based editor.

True to the collaborative origins of a wiki, any visitor to the site can edit the contents or add a new page, which is not really desirable in a blog.

Changes to the platform can be made using the Settings links on the top right corner. Under page style you can change the page colour scheme. Under the Page Manage link you can specify the users who can modify the contents of the bliki. If you prefer to be the only one doing the editing (as is the case with blog) you should change the Edit-Lock entry to Admin only. To ensure that all pages that you create retain these settings, visit the Policy link. Here you can change the “New page Default Edit-lock-type” to Admin only. Also enable the “Deny anonymous Create New Page” to avoid visitors from creating pages on your bliki. Under the CSS link you can insert custom CSS code, if you know what you are doing. Under the Menu Page and Default Page you can edit the contents of these two pages, which are also editable by using the Edit Tab on the right hand top corner of every page.

Concluding Remarks

As a technology demonstrator, atwiki.com impresses us—the potential of a bliki is quite evident after using it. The language on the site is (refreshingly) childish, and reading through the FAQ is hilarious. Nevertheless, users with knowledge of CSS can create a layout that they would be comfortable with. While it may not be suitable for professional use, from a personal blogger’s view—the large Google ad notwithstanding—Atwiki offers a bit more than an ordinary blog.

Other providers worth a look are wikidot.com and netcipia.net, with the latter offering a much better implementation of the bliki concept than atwiki.com.

Entering The Community



Blogging can be more than just a personal storytelling experience. Sure, the point of having an online diary itself can be rewarding, but these days blogging can make you some pocket money and, if you are really serious about it, a living as well.

2.1 Blogging For Fame

There was once a time when the only people whose memoirs made them famous were politicians and celebrities. But being the great 'changer of everything' the Internet gave ordinary people like us the chance to show our stuff to the world, without a press agent or a marketing budget. And with blogs being the buzzword of today, what better way to get noticed. There are several people who have found fame and/or fortune through blogs. Here's a look at some of them.

2.1.1 Vantage Point

(<http://gauravsabnis.blogspot.com/>)

Gaurav Sabnis was one of the early adopters of blogs in India. His blog, Vantage point, is a look at current happenings in news and sport. The writer is an avid quizzer and his style of writing combined with some insights on Indian culture and polity bring in the hits almost daily. Sabnis rose to fame after the infamous IIPM controversy (see box later) when he left his job at IBM. Since then, he has been called an expert on Indian blogging and lives out that reputation by dishing out entry after entry of insightful literature on the state of Indian affairs.

Vantage point

Say Goodbye To Dhoni,
Sachin, Dada, Zaheer Or Get them on
NEO Sports! Cricket-Only TV Channel
[Watch Dhoni](#)

Sachin Tendulkar
Know All About Sachin Tendulkar: Get
Free Info on All Cricket Players.
[Watch Dhoni](#)

Ads by Google
[Cricket](#)
[Cricket World Cup](#)
[Sachin](#)
[Indian Cricket Team](#)
[Software](#)

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[Different Strokes](#)
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[Pune Bloggers](#)

I write at Silly Point

Previous

- KDhoom-2
- In Defence of Sehmas
- Crazy Kiya Re
- My Thesis Topic
- Oh Shit Up!!
- Word of the Day - Anton
- Looking for roommate... roommate???
- Sometimes Things Need Off...
- My Quiz in Pune
- The Purnea Airline

Archives

Thursday, January 11, 2007

KDhoom-2

Last week I watched Dhoom-2. Obviously, went in with zero expectations, and as the desi cliché goes, left my brains at home. Decided to just focus on the bizarre and the illogical and enjoy the movie by ridiculing it.

And the movie still traumatized me. And it was not just bad acting, bad story, irritating songs, amateurish dialogues, and Uday Chopra that drove me nuts. It was also the way that the movie treated the Law of Gravitation as mere Guidelines of Gravitation, which could be ignored whenever you want.

There are several dozen instances where gravity is blithely disregarded. And in only about half of these instances is there a logical explanation i.e. "push-up bras". The other half of instances, almost always involving Hrithik Roshan, tortured me, kept me awake at nights and scarred me. Even when I would fall asleep, I would wake up sweating and shouting "BUT SANDAY GADHVI, WHAT ABOUT THE SECOND LAW OF MOTION???"

Finally I learnt to deal with my scars. I had an epiphany. I have come up with a simple explanation to allow me restful nights. Dhoom-2 is a sequel of Dhoom. Of course it is. BUT BUT BUT... it is also a sequel of Krishi!

It all falls into place. A or Aryan is Krishi. Which is why he can do everything he can without pissing on Newton's grave. Just think about it. Krishi looked like Hrithik Roshan, Aryan looks like Hrithik Roshan. Krishi danced well. Aryan dances well. Krishi had 6 fingers on his right hand. Aryan has 6 fingers on his right hand. Krishi had the hots for a Miss World who can't act. Aryan has the hots for a Miss World who can't act.

It all adds up. Not only does this epiphany allow me and many disturbed viewers like you infinite mental peace. It also ruins

2.1.2 India Uncut

(<http://indiauncut.blogspot.com/>)

Amit Varma is a Mumbai-ite with a sense of humour and the ability to find things funny, or find funny things in the most unexpected of places. His blog, India Uncut, was voted best Indian Blog of the year by Indibloggies. His non-conformist style, combined with an uncanny knack to spot the humour in any situation brings in the hits day after day. Again, like Sabnis, Varma was also

India Uncut

Monday, January 15, 2007

Why India needs school vouchers

This piece was published as an Op-Ed in today's Wall Street Journal Asia. (Subscriber link.) It started life as a 1050-word piece, and ended up around 600 words due to constraints of space, so I will have more to write on this subject by and by.

On India's Republic Day, January 26, the New Delhi-based Centre for Civil Society will launch a campaign for school choice. It's an apt day for the event. While India's constitution guarantees universal and free education, the government has utterly failed that mission. It's time to encourage the private sector to step in.

Public primary education in India is in dire straits. According to a 2006 study by Pratham, a nongovernmental organisation, more than half the children who join school in the first grade drop out before reaching eighth grade. A study conducted the prior year by the same organization found that 35% of school-going children surveyed between the ages of seven to 14 failed a reading test involving a simple paragraph; 41% of them couldn't subtract or divide properly.

Little wonder that private schools are sprouting up like wildfire to fill the gap. Often illegal, these schools don't just serve the rich and middle classes, but the poor as well. And the quality of education these schools provide is often higher than in their public counterparts. A 1999 government report titled the "Public Report on Basic Education in

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[Kashmiri Musharrat, blah blah blah](#)
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Selected posts
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[Zapak C](#)
[Great Priz](#)
[Goa](#)

an early adopter of the blogging phenom in India. India Uncut has been around for the last three years and continues to grow in stature and hits alike. Most of the popular Indian bloggers these days are those who caught on the blogging bandwagon when it was just getting started here. But more importantly, they let everyone know about it and built a strong community of Indian bloggers that is now considered the be-all and know-all of blogging in our country.

THE IIPM Controversy

The IIPM controversy kick started when an article, written by then JAM writer Arjun Ravi, was published in JAM magazine, edited and published by Rashmi Bansal. The article was an in-depth look at the claims that IIPM (the Indian Institute of Planning and Management, an MBA school) made in its press advertisements. The piece did not raise much controversy when it was published (sometime in June-July 2004). Gaurav Sabnis, who published Vantage Point, posted about this article in his blog with a link to the article on the JAM Web site. This post on Sabnis' blog must have been read by some officials at IIPM. Sabnis, who at the time was working with IBM, was forced to quit his job after IIPM officials threatened to burn IBM laptops if Sabnis did not remove the post. The event caused an uproar in the Indian blogging community who rushed to the support of both Sabnis and Bansal, both of whom were facing much heat from IIPM students and officials. It is considered one of the turning points in Indian blogging.

2.1.3 Youth Curry

(<http://youthcurry.blogspot.com/>)

Rashmi Bansal is editor and publisher of JAM, a popular youth magazine. She writes articles for publications such as Mid-Day, Businessworld and Rediff.com. However, what has really got her the reputation as a writer to be noticed was through her blog, Youth Curry. Her blog has served as an opinion space for a knowledgeable view of trends among the Indian youth. It has also served her in sending out notices about her magazine and popularizing JAM. When the IIPM controversy occurred, her blog was at the receiving end of a horde of hate mail and comments from irate IIPM students and officials. But it was because of this medium that she was able to gain some major credibility amongst the Indian 'blogosphere', as it is so called. From the latest in films to B-school advice, Youth Curry serves up a sumptuous blog feast.

2.1.4 Gautam Ghosh

(<http://gauteq.blogspot.com/>)

The blog title says “Gautam Ghosh—Management Consultant”, but on further reading one instinctively knows that the blog is much more than some regular literature on management consultancy. The blog makes for frequent visits for anyone associated with Indian education and management in any way. Ghosh scouts for news on anything related to organizations and companies and opines about them with a touch of salt and no hint of cynicism. His updates on managing organizations are text-book material.

Gautam Ghosh - Management Consultant
A blog about Organizations, Work, People, Strategy, Learning, Knowledge, Innovation and High Performance.

Are You A Great Gamer? - Prove Yourself Now on Zapsk.com & Win Great Prizes Laptops Goa Trip! zapsk.com
Add by Google [Advertise on this site](#)

CEO as Politician
1 Comments Published by Sepia Mutiny on Monday 14, 2007 at 2:02 PM

Alan Murray says in the WSJ that today's CEO is required to play the role of a politician also. Under closer surveillance from shareholders, hedge-funds, investors and regulators, leaders can no longer afford to focus purely on getting the numbers right. Today's CEO needs to play the role of politician, appealing broadly to "stakeholders", a group that includes shareholders, employees, customers and consumers.

So this means that COOs, CFOs, CMOs and other CXOs who fancy their growth to be as a CEO in the future need to build: not just business strategy skills, or to get to know the market and business better, but also be a 'symbol' for the organization as a politician is for the market.

The mark of a successful politician is also to simplify a complex message and to use stories and metaphors to convey to their constituents. In my view that is a skill that is going to be increasingly going to be asked of CEOs and other business students.

So, if you are a business manager or leader, here's my advice to build this skill. Go to an undergrad student class and explain your business model in non-technical terms.

You never know what you might learn about your own business if you simplify it to communicate :-)

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Subscribe through email
Email:
Subscribe
E-mail powered

My Website
Gautam Ghosh Webpage
Our Firm
the Imagina Partners

2.1.5 Sepia Mutiny

(<http://www.sepiamutiny.com/sepia/>)

Sepia Mutiny is a community blog that is updated by people of Indian origin living in the US. The content deals with issues of Indian interest that are brought up by western media. Though you will also find topics of general interest, it is the US-India angle



issues that really rock. The site also has very vociferous readers who are not afraid to post long comments in response to what they read.

2.1.6 Digital Inspiration

(<http://labnol.blogspot.com/>)

Digital Inspiration is the Indian poster child for raking in the cash from blogging. If you are skeptical about the earning potential from blogging or are seriously considering taking up blogging as a living, you only have to look at this blog. Amit Agarwal is a technophile who has turned his passion into a successful blog. Featured on CNN-IBN, it is rumored that Amit's blog earns him in lakhs per month. The slick professionalism of his blog is testament enough to that. According to the site statistics Digital Inspiration had over 12 million page views in 2006. It is also in the top 500 on Technorati. All these trivia aside, Digital Inspiration is necessary for anyone who wants to keep abreast of the latest tech news.

How Much Is Your Blog Worth

This is a nifty site that shows you how much money (in US dollars) is your blog worth. Using some devised algorithm, the site measures how much money is your blog really worth. Just type in the URL of your blog in the space provided and hit the button. You can also compare how much your blog is worth compared to any others by just checking how much those blogs are worth. Try any of those we've mentioned above for starters.

2.1.7 The Queen of The Sky

(<http://queenofsky.journalspace.com/>)

Ellen Simonetti was an airline attendant in a major US airline. She used to run a blog called The Queen of The Sky through which she shared her family and airline experiences. The blog was slow to gain popularity, but when Ellen posted pictures of herself, that showed, according to the airline, a more than socially acceptable level of cleavage in some photographs, the airline fired her. Simonetti, obviously aggrieved, filed a lawsuit against the airline for “wrongful termination, defamation of character and lost future wages.” The story became suddenly headline worthy and was carried in the press quite exhaustively.

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying a blog titled "Diary of a Flight Attendant" with a "Fired" stamp. The post is titled "Hello from L.A.!" and is dated "posted 01/19/07". The content of the post reads: "Hi All, I'm in L.A... exhausted. Long story, but the short of it is, the trip almost got cancelled at the last minute due to miscommunication. Gotta run... I'm on the hotel computer and there's a line. Ciao! -Q of S Diqq This". Below the post, it says "5 comments" and "Forward to a friend". On the right side, there is a sidebar with a "Join Now!" button and a "Read excerpt here and review here" link. The bottom of the page features a "Quick Update" section with the text "posted 01/04/07 (edited Thursday, Jan 04, 2007 17:40)".

2.2 What It Takes

So what does it really take to make it big in the blog world, and, for that matter, the Web world as well? Of course there isn't some instant mantra that you can follow to get blogging success, but by following these simple tips, you can make your mark and, probably, a few bucks as well.

2.2.1 Pen... err... Keyboard Ready!

First of all, before getting into the real, nitty-gritty of the blogging business, it is important that you have the keyboard at hand at all or most times. This doesn't mean that you need to carry a laptop with you at all times. It just means that mental notes of things you want to blog about are often forgotten, so it is advisable to write it down somewhere (backs of bus/train tickets, napkins at restaurants, etc., make for reasonable idea remembrance).

Ideas are no respecters of time and place, they may come at you in the oddest of moments. If you are planning to be a dedicated blogger, always keep a pen and shorthand pad within easy reach. Better to jot down the fleeting idea, rather than lose it. It may be that one such idea will be your greatest post and float you to the top of the blogosphere. You never know.

2.2.2 Put Thoughts To Words

A great idea is just an idea until you tell someone about it. To blog, you need to be able to write. Which doesn't mean that you need to be a 'writer' per se. Basically, you should be able to spill out the idea in your head, in words. The reader must be able to see what you see, and 'get' what you want to say. The better the articulation of your thoughts, the better the reader's experience, and more likely will be the connection with your thought. So get your words as vivid as your thoughts.

There are few things to keep in mind when spilling your thoughts out on paper. Do not get into long sentences. This is a sure shot way to lose readers. This does not mean that you cannot

use long sentences. Sometimes what you have to say cannot be said any shorter, but use them sparingly. The objective is to keep the reader's mind engaged. Too many short sentences can also be disorienting. Group your thoughts into paragraphs. Keep a logical flow from one thought to the next.

Till you get comfortable and confident with your writing, be prepared to proof read what you've written. If you are using Microsoft Word you can also use their Spelling and Grammar (Press [F7] or **Tools > Spelling and Grammar**) tool to check for spelling and grammatical errors. Remember that the tool is just a guide and you will have to make your own judgment and decide what is right. For example, a general rule of writing is to avoid passive sentences. MS Word may highlight certain sentences as passive. Your decision to change it to the active voice should be dependant on the context and not just what MS Word says! Also, turn on readability statistics (**Tools > Options > Spelling and Grammar > Show Readability Statistics**). This will further help you get a general idea about how readable your post is. There are three readability metrics that are helpful:

- **Passive Sentences:** Shows the percentage of passive sentences in the entire document. Lower is better. Aim for anything less than 5-10%
- **Flesch Reading Ease:** A measure of how easily readable your document is. On a scale of 0 to 100, higher is better.
- **Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level:** A measure of how easily readable your document is to grade school (primarily US/English speaking) kids. Lower is better. Aim for a typical score of between 10-12.

Again, remember that these tools are just a guide. The final decision is yours.

2.2.3 Be Topical... Or Not!

This is one of the great debates in blogging. Should blogs be personal diaries? Should they be opinions on things of 'popular importance'? Should they be a description of how bad your lunch was?

We say, you don't need to confine yourself to 'genre-ising' your blog. Write about anything and everything you fancy. As long as you're true to your words, and you feel that it's a thought that has readership potential, go ahead, blather all you want. There is also a merit in discussing just one topic like rock music, or cricket, or bus travel. But decide where you have more things to write about, consistently, and go with that.

What you write about will in part be dictated by your blog's theme, your objectives (if any!) in maintaining a blog and of course what's buzzing in your mental word factory. In general if you decide to focus on a particular topic you should stick to it. Though of course, it being a personal blog, going off topic once in a while will be a refreshing change that will break the monotony of sticking to the same subject.

2.2.4 Language No Bar

This is the next wave in blogging. Regional language blogs. Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Chinese, French, Spanish, Swahili. Blogging is not just an English language fad. Regional and foreign language blogs are an untapped market. There's tonnes of readers looking out to read content in their own language. Desi Pundit (<http://www.desipundit.com/>), a popular Indian blog, is available in, apart from English, Hindi, Kannada, Tamil, Bangla and Marathi! Hindi Blogs (<http://www.hindiblogs.com/>) is a free Hindi blog aggregator and is a great place to get into the whole Hindi blog movement.

2.2.5 Consistency Pays

The blogosphere is littered with one post and ten post blogs. If you wish to make a name or earn an income from blogging you will need to be there posting to your blog regularly. If today is April and your last post was in January, the likelihood of anyone reading your blog is slim to nil. With blogging, you have to be regular. Which is not to say that you should think of it as a daily chore, but more that you need to have at least some schedule of regularity in your updates. You may choose to write everyday, or you may

choose to write once or twice a week. Whatever the regularity you decide, stick to it. It is the only way you can try and ensure regular visitors at your blog. Choose a regularity that you are sure you can keep.

2.2.6 Be Prepared To Have No Readers!

At the beginning, it is quite likely that the only person who visits your blog, is you. Things are usually slow when it comes to visitors on blogs. Remember that there are millions of blogs on the web all vying for readers' time, and though you're not just another blogger, you are just another blogger in the bigger picture. To build a loyal reader base you need to be persevering enough to go a long time with a very few set of visitors. But perseverance does pay and will pay in the long run. Be persistent and consistent and you will see the results soon enough.

2.3 Blogging Etiquette

Just like you never leave the table till the last person has finished eating, blogging too has, over the years, developed its own etiquette and mannerisms that one should keep in mind when speaking to the world. Think of the blog as your newspaper that a whole bunch of people are giving their time to. You wouldn't want to inadvertently put them off now, would you?

2.3.1 Own Up To Mistakes

Bloggers are an unforgiving lot, especially those who've been around for a few years. You've got to be particular about any claims you make and make sure that you've got your bases covered and your facts right. It's always advisable to stray from purposeless claim making, especially if it's about some sensitive issue. But if you do end up making a mistake, own-up and own-up fast. Mistakes are quick to be noticed and quick to be criticized. They can seriously damage your reputation as a blogger and affect the number of visitors you get at your blog.

2.3.2 You Need Street-Cred

As with most things these days, you need to have some reputation to make a mark. And that reputation needs to be built. The easy way to build your reputation is by becoming an expert in any particular area that you are specially interested in. This is easy. Choose any topic of interest and research it on the Internet for six months and you will know more about it than most people. Reputation as a consistent blogger with an informed and well articulated point of view will more or less guarantee a loyal group of frequent readers. You also need good rep to ensure that what you say is ‘bought’ by your readers. Otherwise, you’re just another chap with a big mouth.

2.3.3 Don’t Be Away Too Long

Long spells of no updates are not recommended. If you must be away, or are unable to update for a reasonably long period (even two weeks is long in the blogging world these days), let your readers know that you are going to be away. You can’t expect visitors in the same numbers when you haven’t updated for a while. Consistency also pays in building your reputation as someone who can be trusted to have content regularly. The longer you stay away the more you risk losing readers.

2.3.4 Be Inspired, Don’t Copy

One of the biggest turns offs to blog readers is plagiarized content or using somebody else’s material and passing it off as your own. You have to have your own style when blogging. Developing your own style and voice in your writing will take time. There are no shortcuts. Now this style can be ‘inspired’ from the writing style of somebody else, but it cannot be a direct rip-off.

You just can’t afford to be seen as a copy-cat. If you want to use somebody else’s material be sure to cite the source and provide a link back to the site from where you got the information. If you want to directly use the text of what is said on the other site enclose it in quotes “...” and preface it with something like “xyz.com reports” or “according to xyz.com” and so on.

2.3.5 Be Controversial, but careful

Being controversial is sometimes a sign of independence. Of course, many times it's an attempt to get popular quickly and cheaply. If you decide to be controversial—for whatever reason: to increase the popularity of your blog, because you strongly feel about something or any other reason—do not lose your sense of civility. It's true that your blog is like your own kingdom and what you say on it is entirely within your right to expression. However, if you have voices of dissent on your blog you should, as a matter of courtesy, allow them to be aired. Don't just allow positive comments. Be ready to handle both the praise and criticism. Of course you may choose to edit or delete comments that are full of four letter words and foul language. Allowing both praise and criticism on your blog will send clear signals to your readers. You will jump up in their esteem as a serious blogger who is willing to allow discussion both sides of an issue. Otherwise, you risk losing their respect and being labeled as a propaganda swilling, pompous, self-adulatory windbag!

Professional blogging usually means that you are becoming an authority on some specific topic area. This will mean that at times you will need to take the extra effort to do stuff which you may consider tedious, boring and not cool. For example as part of your blog you may be required to review different graphic designer software tools. It maybe that you have a preference for one particular tool and really dislike another. You will need to be objective and be able to articulate why you dislike a particular and learn to separate the “facts from the fiction” of your personal likes and dislikes. That is not to say you should not express your likes and dislikes. One of the advantages of being a popular blogger is the level of authority that you can command with your reader population. If you can clearly state why you dislike something it will get your fans thinking along those lines and they may agree with you. Of course they may also disagree.

2.3.6 To allow comments or not

Allowing or disallowing people from commenting on your blog will depend on a number of factors including: its popularity and

your personal preferences. Some blogs do not allow comments, as they are more in the information posts. In very popular blogs, comments are often disabled as the number of comments for each single post can exceed be in 100s and the blog author may not have the time to moderate all the comments. Some disable comments but provide the option of Trackback links. The trackback link will enable you to write your own blog post referring to another blog and post a link back to your post on the other blog.

2.4 Professional Blogging

Unbelievable as it may sound, there are many people making a full time living and income from blogging. The road to financial independence through blogging however is not easy. The primary requirement is a change in mindset. You have to stop thinking like an employee and start thinking like an entrepreneur. To rely on your blog as your sole source of income will require to you to focus all your efforts in this direction.

Of course since blogging involves the written word you will need to practice writing. And there is no better way to do that than by—what else—maintaining a blog. Inculcating the habit of writing will help you cross the first major milestone on your road to blogging success.

It is a good idea to write down a formal set of objectives on what you want to do with your blog and where you want it to go. Take a look Avinash Kaushik's goals for his blog, Occam's Razor—<http://www.kaushik.net/avinash/blog-goals>. He had set up two types of goals—a quantitative and a qualitative goal. The quantitative goal aimed to break into the top 10,000 at Technorati by end 2006. He reached the top 5,000 by end October 2006. He had a qualitative goal of getting 3 people to comment on his blog, by October end he was getting average 9 comments per post.

Goal setting will help clarify and remove doubts about what the blog is supposed to do. Start with a plan and be ready to change it if things are not working out expected. This is the entrepreneurial mind set. The Web and blogging is a highly fluid and dynamic environment and you have to be on your toes to find out the latest opportunity that you can capitalize on.

To be a professional blogger the first requirement is to have tons of visitors. This can be achieved only one way. Have plenty of good original content that is readable again and again. When you start out blogging this is your primary goal. To build traffic. See Chapter 4 and 5 for more details on some techniques to attract visitors.

Attracting visitors will naturally mean deciding on your topic area or niche. To decide on your niche is no small task. As a general rule of thumb, chose a niche where you have some level of interest. This is a motivational factor that can make or break your blog. As long as you are able to consistently sustain a level of interest in a chosen subject area you will be able to blog on it. The next step is to define your audience in as broad terms as possible. For example if you are a Photoshop fan and you want to blog on it—it might be a better choice to keep your blogging to the entire gambit of Graphic Designing. Thus you will not only be able to maintain the interest level you will also have a much wider range of topics to chose from. Additionally, your audience will not be just limited to Photoshop users.

If you think that you are not up to the task of doing all required to make money from your blog there are plenty of companies, organizations and blogging networks that are looking for bloggers to hire. Of course, this does mean that you need to have some level of writing skills and ability to blog consistently. People who will want to hire you as a blogger will be looking for samples of your work. Ideally, this should be available on your blog itself. Not only will this be good practice for your writing skills, it will also provide you with a ready resume that you can point potential employers to. Your blog can also serve as a ready reference for non-

blogging jobs like copy writing or technical writing. One of the advantages (and possibly a disadvantage as well) is that most writing / blogging jobs do not require a formal college degree. The employer will be more interested in your creative ability and knowledge of the subject.

Finally, do not give up your day job just yet. Success in blogging is not a short-term possibility. You will need to “nurture and water” your blog so that it grows both in content quality and readership. A formal written objective will help keep you focused on the task and enable you to benchmark yourself for success. Pay attention to what is happening and analyze the reasons for success so that you can build on it as well as the reasons for failure so that you can take corrective action. The road to becoming a successful, financially independent blogger is long and hard but the rewards of reaching your goal can be very satisfying.

Writing Blog Posts



As we'll repeat a couple of times in this chapter, we can't really teach you how to create a good blog. But we can give you some pointers. What follows is just rough guidelines for the first-time bloggers; take that statement as a disclaimer!

3.1 Content, Design, And The Title

Like most of what we'll be talking about here, the title, and the design reflecting the content, are important considerations. You'll realise the importance of making the content go with the design when you see a blog that doesn't follow the rule. You don't want to have a hate blog with flowers in the background, do you? No, jokes apart, if you're going to be blogging about your dreams and such, flowers will grace the background well. If you're writing about something serious—say science and technology—keep the design spartan, with possibly a picture or two that indicate(s) what your blog is about. As an aside, we've seen Web pages about Web design that aren't well-designed themselves!

The colour of the background, the background image(s), the font(s), the placement of items—all go into the making of a good blog. As a corollary, you should decide on what you're going to write about before you go about designing it.

As for what you should put on your page besides text, use common sense. Just one example: if your blog is light-hearted, you *might* want to include such things as “my current mood”; if you're very young, it's perfectly fine to animate the emoticon as well, on a MySpace blog, for example. Now if you're 45 and are blogging about politics, the “current mood” thing is, we think, a rather bad idea!

Another aside: a balance you should strive to strike. You need to determine who your readers will be, and blog for them. At the same time, you've got to let your identity come through. It's up to you how you'll achieve that balance—the sweet spot.

Coming to the title, we should mention that it's in general not a good idea to use a grandiose title for your blog, such as “The World According To Me.” No-one likes narcissistic titles... or a clichéd one like “Life, The Universe, And Everything,” or any of its variants. “My blog” or “(your name)'s blog” is also boring. Either

make the title accurately reflect your blog's content, or try and come up with a genuinely creative one!

3.2 Topic, Focus, Style, Structure

We're assuming here that you aren't intending to write something like a personal diary, which millions of bloggers do. If that is indeed your intent, you can afford to style your content any way you like—there are no tips we need to give you, because it's entirely personal.

What we are assuming is that you want to make a name for yourself, be someone in the blogosphere. That you want to write a blog that will educate and entertain, and that people will want to come back to—regularly.

In this latter case, you *need* to decide on a topic. Personal blogs can be pretty random, but like we said, blogs of the latter type should have a topic, a focus.

We're not saying every single post should be focused. But it's a good thing if many or most of them are. The reason for this is that readers come to expect something from your blog. Say you have a technology-focused blog with an RSS feed, and people subscribe to it. They don't want to see posts about your dog popping up every now and then, do they? A little digression now and then, though, is strictly OK. Occasional digressions of the personal kind can lend character, if done right.

If you want to write about two or more things on the same blog, it's a good idea to segregate them into sections. The blog will seem pretty random otherwise, which is not a good thing if you're into serious blogging. Unless you deliberately want to make a totally random blog; but in this case, you need to have the writing skills to grip the reader's attention—which can only develop over time. If you're a first-time writer, you're better off keeping your

blog focused. In fact, you get the license to be random only when you're famous enough!

We now come to the idea of style. There are three important points here: decide on one initially, develop it, and stick to it.

Just like we said the content of your blog should go with the design, your style, too, should go with the content. You don't want a philosophical or preachy tone on a technology blog. You don't want a serious tone on a blog about your dreams. And so on. Second, you should know that your style will develop over time—so it's a good idea to do a trial run before actually setting up your permanent blog. Blog with all seriousness on this “trial” blog, then critically appraise it yourself. Ask friends what they think of it, whether it reflects you, and whether it's in keeping with the content. Most importantly, ask yourself whether *you* would come back to a blog like yours!

The third point here is about sticking to your style. Most writers have a style. Consider a novel author. His style might vary somewhat across books, but within a book, you'll seldom see the style varying. The reason it shouldn't is, again, about readers' expectations: they get into a certain “mood” when reading something you've written. That mood should be satisfied, as it were.

Style must be consistent within single posts, as well as across your posts. We can't emphasise this enough: style creates identity, and your identity is, of course, what separates you from other bloggers writing about things similar to what you're writing about. Naturally, this isn't the place to discuss how to develop a style—there are many good books out there that can help you with that. Ditto for structure—you'll just need to practise.

We'll give you two examples, though: one of improper structure and one of inconsistent style. Take the following paragraph, from <http://www.island-of-freedom.com/schopen.htm>.

“Arthur Schopenhauer is frequently referred to as a pessimist who inaugurated an emphasis on the will in modern philosophy. His early education was in France and England; he entered the University of Göttingen as a medical student but transferred to Berlin in 1811 to study philosophy. His thesis was written in 1813. (Point 1.) Though she had bitter and antagonistic relations him, his mother established a salon at Weimar which allowed him to meet literary figures, including Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, whose conversations inspired Schopenhauer’s *On Vision and Colours* in 1816. The *World as Will and Representation*, his major work, appeared in 1818. (Point 2.) After his father’s death he devoted himself entirely to philosophy, being able to live comfortably on his inheritance. (Point 3.) When he applied to become a lecturer at the University of Berlin, he was accepted by a committee which included Hegel as a member.”

Look at the three Points above. At Point 1, the writer jumps from “thesis” to “mother.” At Point 2, there is a leap from “his major work” to “his father’s death.” At Point 3 is the worst offence: the writer was talking about the man living on an inheritance; how could he have gone back to when the man “applied to become a lecturer”?

Then, here’s an example lifted from www.cs.toronto.edu/compling/Publications/Abstracts/Papers/Glover+Hirst-96-abs.html:

An example of stylistic inconsistency can be seen in the following sentence, which is from a brochure given to hospital patients who are to undergo a cardiac catheterization. (The parenthesised numbers are ours, to refer to the individual clauses.)

(1) Once the determination for a cardiac catheterization has been made, (2) various tests will need to be performed (3) to properly assess your condition prior to the procedure.

Clause 1 and (to a slightly lesser extent) clause 3 are in medical talk, as if in a formal communication from physician to physician; clause 2 is

much more informal, and is expressed in ordinary lay language. The effect of the two styles mixed together in the one sentence is a feeling of incongruity—which was presumably not intended by the author or authors. This example, however, is unusual in its brevity. More often, the problem of inconsistency emerges only over longer stretches of text, especially where the granularity of the multiple authorship is at the paragraph, section, or chapter level.

This should give you an idea of what exactly we're referring to when we mean inconsistency in style.

3.3 What To Blog About

The first consideration here is whether you want to report on what's going on all over the Internet, that is, regurgitating content, or whether you want to churn out original content.

The former isn't as bad as it sounds—"regurgitated" is just the technical word we're using. It essentially means you're aggregating content and links, with some of your own commentary, of course. What gets created is one place for people with a particular interest to visit, instead of them going about all over the Net looking for the interesting stuff. What will be the personal and distinguishing aspect here is, of course, your commentary: a blog that just aggregates can be pretty boring. Besides, it will not have an identity.

If you're planning on writing original stuff, amongst other things, you should be a good writer. That's about all we can say here. Do some introspection and self-analysis: are you a good writer? Ask your friends—close ones, who'll tell you the truth—do *they* think you're a good writer? It's a bad idea to jump into original writing without some writing flair and experience. The idea of a blog of your own—with entirely your writing on it—may seem very appealing indeed, but it will be just lost in the clutter if you're not what people call a good writer. Naturally, you can

develop your skills, and if you try your hand at writing, you might even discover that you do have the flair. It's something like playing a musical instrument: it comes naturally with some people; for some, it's just a matter of practice before they become a pro; and some people will remain mediocre players however hard they try. We're telling you like it is!

Next up is some rather obvious advice: blog about what you're most comfortable with, what you're most passionate about, and what you know about. (These will help the cause if you're a less-than-perfect writer.) Looking at it the other way, don't create a blog on some topic just because you want to be known as a writer on that topic. It'll show at some point or the other that the topic isn't your core competency, as it were.

To belabour the point, the topic should be such that your hand moves freely along the keyboard as you think about it. Now passion and knowledge can, in certain cases, compensate for each other: people will read your blog even if it's written a dry manner *if it conveys a good deal of fresh, authentic information*. The other way, if you're really passionate about something, you can earn a readership even if your coverage is less than complete.

Don't let the idea of "letting your knowledge out" bother you. On a cynical but realistic note, it's unlikely that no-one else on the Internet knows what you know—if it's worth knowing, it probably is out there in some form or the other!

Another important point is not to fear being lost in the crowd. We've come across people who don't blog on their favourite topic because "there are too many of them out there." This shouldn't be a deterrent—it's a challenge! It's a challenge on two counts—using your writing and other skills to turn the topic into something so interesting that people will read you instead of someone else, and using your knowledge to bring out at least some gems that the others haven't touched upon.

Finally, remember that a good blog on a little-discussed topic, one that caters to a niche audience, has a good chance of being a success. It's as with anything else—if you don't have too much competition, you can create your own space. Think about uncommon things that interest you.

3.4 Links And Sources

Depending on your writing style, you'll need fewer or more links in your blog posts. If you mostly write (hopefully thoughtful and thought-provoking) essays, which are almost entirely personal opinions, you won't need too many links. But if your blog is more conventional, you'll probably want to link a lot.

For example, if you maintain a technology blog, you might want to incorporate a lot of links—some links at the end of the page for more on the topic, and the post itself peppered with links here and there, pointing to, say, Answers.com, or Wikipedia. The links along your post should serve a purpose: to make some terms clear, or to lend credence to your post.

Do *not* overdo it! Most people find too many links a put-off. For example, on Wikipedia, half the words seem to be links—if an article says so-and-so died on the 4th of January, the word “died” might probably link to the Wikipedia entry for “death.” This might work on a site such as Wikipedia, but it's a bad idea for a blog. Strike the balance. Try and put in just the right number of links.

Sources are a must. As it is, the Web can sometimes seem chaotic, and there is mass confusion over some topics: you don't want your post to add to the confusion. If it's a personal opinion, indicate that clearly either by explicitly stating the fact, or by letting it emerge in the way you write. If it's *not* just a personal opinion, you should definitely quote your sources and hyperlink them. Remember here that the more credible your source, the more credible your blog post will be—naturally.

Linking to or quoting other blogs is sometimes a good idea. If you find something on someone else's blog that you find interesting, and choose to write about it yourself, it takes just a modicum of humility to quote the other person and attribute the idea to him or her. It really shouldn't matter to you "who got there first": it will not if honesty is among your priorities. What is a bad idea is to quote another blog entirely. No-one needs that—a link with some commentary will do. Ditto for news items you're bringing to the attention of your readers.

Again, it's sometimes a good thing to quote a little bit of the other item, link to the page it has been lifted from, and then talk about the part you quoted and why it is interesting (to you and/or your readers). You'll see this often on many well-made blogs.

View some popular bloggers' blogs to see how they link to other pages or blogs, and how they quote their sources. You should get the general idea.

3.5 Articulateness

We cannot teach you how to be, but you need to be articulate if your blog is to be a success. This has several distinct aspects to it: don't use overly long sentences to sound wise. Don't write as you would speak, unless it's a very personal blog about, say, your dreams (which kind we're not really talking about here). Too much slang is a definite no-no. Clarity, precision, and conciseness are important. And so on.

While we're telling you not to sound wise, we're also telling you that writing with some authority is always a good thing. People don't want to be left wondering. Here's an example: instead of saying "there's some confusion about this, and I'm not sure what's going on," dig a little deeper and try and clear that confusion. If you're not able to, be absolutely clear about it: "This is something I don't have a clear answer to—do let me know if you

come across something that will clear the air a bit.” This even adds an interactive element, and can spark off a discussion right in the comments section of your blog.

Talking about authority in a little detail, there are two aspects to it: one is that you should write a post after having researched enough about it, or if you already know enough about the topic at hand. The other is the language aspect of it: you want your readers to feel they’re getting the best content out there, so choose your words with care.

At the same time, quote your sources, like we said before. No one likes pronouncements that aren’t backed up by facts: if it’s an original idea, make sure you go into sufficient detail to make it believable.

A corollary of being articulate is that you shouldn’t ramble. Let’s emphasise it: you *must not* ramble—your readers will not like it. Rambling is a mistake too many bloggers make, being carried away by the whole idea of the blog being a platform for all their thoughts. Give your readers a thought: this is 2007, and people are busy. They want good content—they have no time to wade through your ramblings. By “rambling,” we specifically mean going off topic too often and for too long. If the “off-topics” interest you sufficiently, write another blog post about those.

A suggestion here if a topic has too many sub-topics: write little posts on each of them, and link to all of them in your main post. But, to repeat, each individual post should be self-contained. (Remember what we said about focus.) A reader must never be left wondering what that was all about.

Of course, some people like to ramble, and use their blogs as their online diaries. Blogs with names such as “The Random Ramblings Of...” are all too common. If you feel the need to vent, to “get it out of your system,” use a separate, most private blog—which will, in all probability, not be a roaring success.

A final point: choose your words and “level” of language depending on your intended readership. You don’t want your readers needing to refer to a dictionary as they’re reading your post—and neither do you want to sound simplistic to a sophisticated crowd.

3.6 Follow The Rules...

... of grammar and punctuation and so on. This point is an oft-overlooked one: you’ll see many blogs that don’t bother with proper punctuation and paragraph breaks and so on, but you will notice that the best—and most well-written—blogs do follow these rules.

It’s simple. There exist readers who can’t differentiate between a grammatically perfect blog post and one that’s written in a hurry with little attention being paid to such things as commas and full-stops, and those people won’t care. Yes, you aren’t doing *them* a favour by punctuating correctly. But what about that part of your readership that does care for such things? Poor language will certainly be a put-off.

It’s not to sound wise or very well-educated: it’s just that some people are linguistically sensitive, and are put off by laxity in grammar and punctuation. For best results, therefore, do spell-checks before posting. Microsoft Word doesn’t do a terrific job with its grammar checking feature, but one must admit it can help with common errors—you could try using that feature.

Coming to a more important point, we think there’s no famous blogger out there who uses SMS-speak, or teen-speak, or whatever you might care to call it: “ur” for “your” and such. Avoid such language like the plague, even if more and more people seem to be getting used to it! To a sensitive eye, it looks crass and uneducated. An uncapitalised “I” could mar your blog when it comes to such people! Again, you don’t need to care about people who don’t care—no-one’s going to tell you, “you shouldn’t have capitalised that ‘I’”!

Go through your blog post once or even twice before posting. Almost all people find errors the first time they read what they've written. And it's not just for the errors: you might even begin to have doubts about the content—"Does that merit discussion?" "Have I written too little about this?" "Will my readers understand this point?" And so on. Edit your own work—you'll be surprised how much of a difference this can make.

From <http://snipurl.com/blog111>, here are 10 good rules to follow with a blog.

1. Use descriptive headlines that reveal the point of the article without further reading; the key here is to create micro-content that can fare well on its own. (An example of a good title is "Edit Captions in Picasa Web Albums" used at the unofficial Google System. An example of a bad title is the official Google blog's "Greetings, Earthlings!") Keep in mind the headline may be read in an RSS reader, a news portal which aggregates content, a search result, your blog archive, a bookmark and so on, and it may be surrounded by dozens of other headlines.
2. Write in inverted pyramid style: first get to the point and mention the core ideas, then fill in the details in later paragraphs. The first and second sentence should allow people to decide if they want to continue reading this.
3. The first link is the one most people click on, so it should also be the main link for your article. Also, too many links too close to each other diffuse your point and make you less of a filter, and a (news) blog should always be a filter for others.
4. In each longer post, re-introduce core ideas you mention because your readers come from all walks of life and may not be up-to-date (e.g. they may read your archived post half a decade from now coming from a search engine). It's better to say "The Electronic Frontier Foundation yesterday announced ... the EFF also said that ..." than to say "The EFF announced... the EFF also said that ...".

5. Use lists, images, tables, sub-headlines, examples, indented notes, indented quotes, icons, colours, bold and italics to lighten up your article and make it easier to scan it. Don't expect everyone to cling to every of your words; instead, you can expect a large part of your readers to sit at the office, a coffee in one hand and the mouse in the other, trying to get up to speed at nine in the morning.
6. With a global audience it's never a good idea to only use sophisticated words not everyone may know. Some of your readers may speak English only as second language. They may want to learn new words, but it shouldn't come at the price of missing your post's point. (If you only speak English as second language to begin with, following this rule might be much easier.)
7. Credit your sources with a mention and link. As opposed to mainstream news posts, bloggers usually tell where they got the story from.
8. Mark updates and changes (and do update and change when readers find something wrong in your writing).
9. Spell-check your posts, and read them for clarity once or twice before posting. An error now and then isn't bad but the less fewer errors, the more quickly people will be able to read and understand your article.
10. To practically all of these rules there are exceptions. For example, when your post is very humorous in tone and has a punch line, you may specifically not want to give it away in the title. Or when you're writing a longer essay, you'll just have to live with the fact that you won't be able to "cut to the chase" in the first paragraph. Another exception is that it's not really necessary to mark every change, e.g. when you fix a typo somewhere in the text, or when you just posted 10 seconds ago. Not every post needs an image, etc. etc. And sometimes, breaking the rule is a conscious style element.

3.7 Your Opinion...

This is probably one of the hardest things to achieve when it comes to blog writing. We're talking about the balance between having an opinion and being neutral.

On the one hand, you need to have an identity, and therefore some opinion about the topics you write about. A piece of writing is bland without an opinion of some sort. On the other hand, do your readers want the facts or do they want your opinion? Then, there's the issue of your readership: if you have an opinion or sentiment you constantly air throughout all your posts, you'll have loyal readers who subscribe to that same opinion. At the same time, you'll lose all your other readers.

Another thing to consider is that constantly airing your opinions could be a put-off for the mere reason that it might sound self-aggrandising. And that's something you definitely don't want if your blog is to be a success with the Internet/Blogging community at large.

There are several answers to the question. First, you will need to identify who will read your blog, and voice (or silence) your opinions accordingly. Second, never ever post an opinion that sounds like a fact! This happens all too often—you'll see a post that says, "The top ten reasons the PS3 will not succeed." Then you'll see a list of reasons, without any sources. Yes, such posts are interesting, but you need to at least throw in a few words to indicate that it is your opinion: "There are several reasons I believe the PS3 will not succeed. I can't say for sure, of course, but here goes..." That, as an introduction to the post, is valuable. And then, you'll need to give sources for all the information you compile into that list.

Third, there's a difference between having an opinion and being opinionated. The latter is, in general, a bad thing: you'll lose some readership on that count alone.

On the other hand, it's healthy to have an opinion, although you don't *need* to have one on every single thing you write about.

Finally, it comes down to how famous you are. A first-time blogger, unless exceptionally gifted with knowledge and words alike, is better off being reasonably neutral.

As your blog grows in popularity, you get more and more of the license to be yourself—and you can even afford to be opinionated once you're sufficiently famous. It works just like in life!

This isn't a blog-your-way-to-fame-and-fortune book, so, naturally, we can't tell you how to become a known entity in the blogosphere—none of us here are famous! However...

Like we said, when you start off your blog, keep a low profile. Don't expect people to start listening to you all of a sudden—don't try and start off with a bang.

Be “democratic”—respect other people's opinions, and respect other people in general.

The best blogs reflect in-depth understanding and research. Readers of these blogs, after reading a post, are left a little enriched. The lesson here is to blog what you're most passionate and/or knowledgeable about, like we said earlier.

Always retain a flavour of humility in your posts. This is important because blogs give everyone power, which is in itself a paradoxical situation; the lesson here is to wield that power well.

Make it a point to reply to responses to your posts—the reader will be that much more likely to revisit your blog.

As your readership increases, be prepared to put out more content.

Once in a while, invite other people to post on your blog—this can lend a “relief” factor. Other relief factors can be in the form of pictures, animations, and polls. (Don’t overdo the animations!)

Again, once in a while, just talk about yourself or about life in general—or just ramble. This lends the personal touch. Your readers do want to know about you—once you’re popular enough. But remember strictly not to overdo this.

And finally, life on the Internet is “fast”—make it a point to keep yourself abreast with what’s going on in the world. Your blog will reflect the depth of your understanding sooner or later, and your understanding of things itself will only improve over time as you constantly educate yourself. Keep learning and unlearning—all the time.

3.8 Don’t Slacken

You feel odd when the newspaper isn’t delivered, don’t you? It’s just force of habit. Very similarly, once you’re reasonably popular, your readers will just *expect* a new post every once in a while. We can’t give you a precise time—we can’t say, “You should put up a new post at least every second day” or something like that, but the general idea is to be regular.

Long periods of inactivity are a strict no-no for two reasons: first, your readers will just drift off to other blogs similar to yours, and second, they’ll think you aren’t sincere enough. They want their “dose” of you. (At least when you’re popular enough!)

In simple words, don’t be lazy. If you’re doing something, do it well, goes the popular saying. If you started a blog, be devoted to it—spend as much time as you can afford on it.

A word of caution here: you might be tempted to change the design every now and then, and if that’s the case, resist the temp-

tation. Readers get used to the look and feel of your blog, and though we can't say never to redesign it, it should either be a very occasional revamping, or small, incremental changes.

What happens if you can't think of anything to write about? Well, if you're passionate enough about your subject(s), this shouldn't happen. A good idea for the occasional time when you just can't think of anything is to ramble a little—about yourself, for example—like we mentioned earlier. (But don't overdo it.) It's better than no post at all! Also, you could always revisit an old post and give your readers updates on the matter... memory spans, like attention spans, are getting shorter.

It's as with anything else—like going to the gym, for example. Inertia, once it creeps in, can spread like a cancer through your system.

3.9 Writing Skills

Be on a constant run to improve your writing skills. Form is as important as content. You don't need to be able to write a gripping thriller, but everyone likes to read a *well-written* blog. Grammar and punctuation is one thing—which we've already mentioned; maintaining a style is one thing—which also we've already mentioned; but the bottomline is, to be famous (which, we're assuming, is your idealistic ultimate goal), you need to write well.

We can't teach you how to write well. But when we say "writing well," we're referring to such things as twisting phrases to make them more interesting; using language to make a dull topic more approachable; making your posts gripping enough to hold your readers' attention for at least the span of the post; avoiding clichés and clichéd phrases; not going into "lyrical digression"—where the writer increases word count and wastes bandwidth by avoiding the central topic and beating round the bush and only then coming back to the point at hand, as we have done with this phrase.

Good writing is an art, nothing less—it's as much of an art and skill as playing a musical instrument is. There are several resources on the Internet on how to improve your language and writing skills; a good place to start is www.poynter.org. It's meant specifically for journalists, but you'll find there more than a couple of tips on good writing.

We did say form is as important as content, but it works the other way round too—content is as important as form! If you do write well, don't be under the delusion that that can be your selling point. Not true. No-one these days has the time to read just for pleasure—reading a post of yours should be worth your readers' while.

A final word: fonts are important. Choose a font in keeping with your content. Avoid horrible fonts like comic sans in any situation!

3.10 Good Blogs

Here are a few examples of good blogs and an explanation of why we think they're good. Apart from the content, of course. Note that these are by professional bloggers!

http://datamining.typepad.com/data_mining/

1. Just the right amount of hyperlinking
2. External entities neatly arranged on the left, archives and categories neatly on the right
3. Updated very frequently
4. Excellent categorisation of posts
5. Up-to-date; well-informed

<http://3quarksdaily.blogs.com/>

1. Eclectic but not disorganised
2. Collation of stuff from the Internet, with sources

3. Good visual support
4. Some essay-type, original content for balance
5. Some posts are pictures, like in a photo-blog; breaks the monotony

<http://www.dailykos.com/>

1. Menu on the right, organised well enough despite a lot of material
2. Quoted text in boxes
3. The right balance between quoted text and original commentary
4. Good headlines for each post
5. Relief in the form of polls etc.
6. Hyperlinks in just the right number and places

<http://www.tmz.com/>

1. Excellent visual/text balance
2. Relief in the form of polls etc.
3. Plenty of related articles and links to other resources readers might wish to look at
4. Very regularly updated
5. Tightly focused on a topic

http://time.blogs.com/daily_dish/

1. Good visual/text balance, again
2. Balance of original content and quoted material
3. Balance between long and short posts
4. Relief in the form of animations and the occasional readers' letters
5. Quoted text clearly identifiable
6. Links to essays with strong opinions

Monetising Your Blog



Making money from (or monetising) your blog involves quite a few things:

- A willingness to work hard
- An entrepreneurial/businesslike approach
- Knowledge of/willingness to learn relevant web technologies
- A monetising strategy
- Consistently implementing the strategy

All these ingredients are crucial to turning your blog from a non-paying though passionate source of personal expression to a solid revenue stream.

To motivate you in this direction you can consider the fact that many bloggers earn upwards of \$100 (about Rs. 4,500) per day and some even cross the \$1000 per day mark. Moreover, these figures have been achieved with little or no startup costs other than the time spent in writing and maintaining their blogs. Just as importantly, also consider the fact that for every successful blogger, 99 others are not.

In this chapter, we look at both the ‘soft’ skills required as well as the techniques that you can use to extract revenue from your blog.

4.1. The Basics

Some of the concepts in this section are covered in greater depth in other chapters. It is being included here again as these techniques and attitudes are crucial in creating and maintaining a successful blog. Only if your blog is a success—that is with hundreds and thousands of daily visitors—can you then focus on deriving money from it.

4.1.1 Attitude, Commitment And Consistency

Before we look at the different revenue streams that are possible with blogging, the first thing to sort out is your mental attitude. Blogging for money, like any other entrepreneurial activity, is hard work. It is in fact, the single hardest thing that you will have to face if you are serious in transitioning from a passionate blogger to a professional one. This does not mean that you leave your passion behind. The only difference being that now your passion is now going to be a source of income also.

The key factor that separates successful bloggers from the unsuccessful ones is commitment. Of course, success can be defined in many different ways but for the purposes of this chapter we consider a successful blog as one that has hundreds of thousands of daily visitors. A blogger who is successful with his blog (or blogs) has primarily committed himself to being passionate about his interest and providing visitors with relevant information. Note that at this stage revenue is not an issue. Transitioning from just sharing your passion on a subject to actually making money from your passion may sound simple but in actual practice, there are complications.

When you are passionate about blogging, you may find that you have ambivalent feelings about earning money from your blog. If you believe that using your ‘passion’ to earn money is ‘wrong’ then you first need to decide whether you do want to use your blog to earn a living or not. Once you commit yourself though, the sky—literally—is the limit.

Commitment not only involves a desire and willingness to be a professional blogger, it also means being consistent with your postings. A blog is a service. Albeit, in many cases a free one but nevertheless it serves an audience. In one sense you could consider your site visitors as ‘customers’ who ‘pay’ you by visiting your site. This means that you have to be consistent in your postings to attract an audience.

Once you begin posting regularly you will attract an audience of readers who will form the initial base. This trickle of readers will continue to evolve and grow and many will come to your blog expecting fresh content on each visit. This expectation of your audience you can control to some extent by deciding how often you are going to post. Remember that it is difficult to scale back from posting several times a day to once a day to several times a week without having an impact on your readership.

A better approach would be to start slow and increase the frequency as you get comfortable with balancing blogging with the rest of your daily schedule. Give yourself sufficient time and be realistic about how often you can post. If you can initially post once a week, make sure you stick to the once a week schedule until you are comfortable with it and are ready to increase the posting frequency. Remember that your visitors will come to expect your posts according to the pace you set. A once a week post will attract a once a week audience and so on.

Another technique is to set goals for yourself. Take the time to write down a monetization strategy (see section 4.3) and commit yourself to certain time bound goals on what you would like to achieve in that time. For example, you may decide that you want to be in the Technorati top 10,000 in six months. Once you define specific goals you can then focus your energies in working in that direction.

Once again, we would like to stress that getting your blog to be successful requires hard work and a serious commitment on the blog author's part to continually keep the content of the blog fresh and updated..

4.1.2 Quality of Content

Quality is a very subjective term. The primary mark of a quality blog is the content. This has less to do with the language and more to do with the subject matter under discussion. Most web visitors will be forgiving of occasional grammatical and spelling errors if the content is high quality and is not directly relevant to the site's topic. Example, if you are writing about jet engines, the emphasis will be on the technical details and accuracy of what you state—language will not be so important. If however, your blog is about writing or language—then obviously, you definitely need to pay attention to the quality of the language as well as the content.

The balance between gaining the respect of your readers through what you write and the importance of keeping your

language error free is a fine line that is always not very clear. This primarily depends on the topic and the demographics (age, background, ethnicity etc) of the audience. Fortunately, in most cases you will receive sufficient warnings from your readers on what you are doing wrong. Pay attention to negative remarks. Judge for yourself whether it is an exaggerated personal viewpoint and can be safely ignored or whether the it is genuinely warranted. If the criticism is constructive, accept it in good grace and go about making the necessary changes. Genuine blogs are built on the ability of the writers to express themselves—honestly and passionately, as well as on their ability to accept constructive criticism graciously and take corrective measures..

If you feel that your writing is not up to the mark and could do with some improvement, blogging is one way to practice. Also, there are plenty of writing resources available on the web to help you improve your writing skills. Aim to be clear in your language and avoid using long sentences. Group thoughts into paragraphs and use the minimum number of words to express the maximum. Avoid repetition unless the context warrants it.

The focus on creating relevant content is to make your Web site more search engine friendly. There is a whole industry around the concept of optimizing your Web site for Search Engines. The general industry term for this activity is Search Engine Optimization or SEO.

There is good SEO and bad SEO, sometimes called white hat and black hat SEO. Good SEO techniques follow guidelines laid down by search engines in making their sites (and blogs) search engine friendly. For those who are serious about turning blogging into a long term income source there is only type of SEO to pay attention to—good SEO.

There are unethical SEO methods that may temporarily boost a blog's search engine ranking (see chapter six) but ultimately, this could prove disastrous. If the Search Engines (Google, Yahoo,

Ask, MSN etc) determine that what you are doing is not permitted and is only designed to boost rankings without any relevant content, they can penalise and black list your site. Unfortunately, Search Engines do not give a clear set of guidelines on what is permitted and what is not. This is because those who try to ‘artificially’ boost their rankings will try to craft their Web site content to avoid the checks that the Search Engines use to detect good content from bad content.

Invariably those who use “black hat” SEO are not bothered about providing quality content on their site. Their primary interest is in luring visitors to their Web sites and getting them to click on advertising links. Luckily, for those who are interested in building a good quality blog with a lot of useful content, there is only one SEO guideline to keep in mind—create good, high quality, useful content. Search engines will in any case index your site and provide links to your site when relevant search queries are entered.

4.1.3 Deciding on the Topic

If you are new to blogging or are still floundering about for a topic to blog with, remember that your topic should be something that you are passionate about, are an expert in or something that you are interested in enough to want to deeply research and write about. Your visitors, in all likelihood, will be just as interested as you are in the topic and your blog may become their default source of information on the subject. Also, try and keep the topic as broad as possible to give you a wide choice of advertisers and the possibility of having a near limitless supply of content to create. With a very narrow topic it may be difficult to continually, find new and fresh content to blog on daily (or weekly as the case may be).

The topic you decide on will also determine your ability to turn it into a revenue source. Given that there are about 1 billion people connected to the Internet as of now, the chances are that almost any topic will have an audience of interested enthusiasts.

However, for a blog to make money there will need to be a minimum number of regular visitors that can then be translated into revenue. There is no fixed benchmark to determine the ideal number of regular visitors. For a niche up-market topic, it may be sufficient if you are able to attract a handful of visitors. For example, if you are passionate about sailing and wish to write only about sailboats, a small audience may be sufficient to create a steady income. On the other hand, if you are blogging on a wider interest topic like say, celebrities, you may need an audience in the tens of thousands before you can consider monetising your blog.

4.1.4 Building Traffic

The single most important thing that will separate your blog from the rest of the crowd can be reduced to a single word: Traffic. If your blog does not have visitors, there is very little you can do to monetise it. Income from your blog (or Web site for that matter) is a function of traffic—that is, the more the traffic, the more the potential income you can generate. If you are able to consistently increase the number of visitors to your blog your income will grow proportionately. This is a self-stoking cycle. The more visitors you have to your blog, the more you will attract!

All of the techniques discussed in this Fast Track contribute to building traffic. However, all these are secondary to the primary point of importance: high quality, focused content.

Building a blog with high quality content is the only sure-fire way to ensure that you attract traffic that will consistently grow. High quality content is something that will engage your users and want them to revisit your site again and again. This means that you will need to take the time and effort to think through each of your postings and to set high standards for yourself.

In the beginning, when you start out, the focus can be less on quality and more on just making sure that you meet your posting schedule. This is because for most bloggers the main problem is not about delivering quality content but the commitment to

maintaining a consistent schedule. Once you get comfortable in your posting schedule you can then pay closer to attention to maintaining and enhancing the quality of your content.

By paying attention to the quality of your blog posts and keeping focused on your topic area, you are doing two things. One, you are consciously or involuntarily educating yourself in the subject area. This will make you something of an expert in your area of interest. Second, you are positioning yourself as a trustworthy source of information on that particular topic. These two factors will act as the reinforcing ‘glue’ that will keep attracting visitors back to your site.

For the first few months forget about traffic and concentrate on building traffic. Be thankful if you receive any comments—positive, negative or indifferent—on your blog. If people are staying long enough to read your blog post and comment on it, then you’re doing something right.

Hook in a free program like Google Analytics (<http://www.google.com/analytics>) to keep track of traffic growth and to understand how your visitors are reaching your site—where they come from, how often they come—new and returning visitors, what search terms they use to find your site and what are the most popular posts they visit.

Once you get an idea of your visitor patterns, you can then go about trying to improve on this by creating more content with reference to the same thing. For example if your most popular post was about a vacation in an exotic location, you may want to do a follow up story about the same place. You could also sell advertising space to tour companies in that area. However, this decision should be consistent with your monetization strategy (see section 4.3) and your blog theme. If for example, if your blog theme is about digital photography and the vacation post is primarily to illustrate the techniques you used to in taking those awesome shots then another post on the subject of vacations maybe inappropriate.

You should also be willing to spend some time marketing your blog. These approaches are more fully covered in chapter five. Only consider paid advertisements if you have a serious plan in monetising your Web site. However, the most basic technique, which is free except for the time you spend, is to visit other blogs of interest and get involved in the comments section there. Most comments sections provide a field to leave your Web site address. Participants in the comments section who like what you say may follow back through your link for more information about your blog.

Do not, unless the conversation warrants it blindly post links back to your blog. This is considered as bad etiquette and many blog owners will remove such links. This is what is known as comment spam. For example, if a blog is discussing politics, do not drop into the comments section and say something like “Please visit my ice cream blog at xyz.com”. Keep the comments meaningful and only point to content on your site if you feel that this will be better illustrated by your post on the subject.

When you find a blog post that you particularly like and wish to write a post on it yourself, make it a point to leave a track back link on the author’s original post. A trackback provides a convenient method to leave links to your blog on other blogs with similar content. Similarly, visitors who refer to a post on your blog can leave trackback links on your site. Trackbacks and links from other Web sites help in improving search engines. Luckily, or unluckily—depending on how you look at it, the only way to get quality trackbacks and links to your blog goes back to the cardinal traffic building rule: provide quality content.

You can also consider taking part in blogging carnivals at <http://blogcarnival.com>. Blog carnivals are like a magazine listing of blogs on a similar topic in one convenient location. Having one of your relevant blog posts included in a carnival can help increase the visibility of your blog as well as provide an opportunity for attracting fresh visitors.

4.1.5 Technical Knowledge

The amount of technical knowledge that you need is not too much. However, you need to have an understanding of all the relevant technologies that you will use. In the initial days, when you are “bootstrapping” yourself, what is more important is getting the content up and getting your audience.

Nevertheless, as you get more proficient with your blog you will want to do many things that you think will improve your blog—both in terms of look and feel as well as in the functioning. For example if you are using the Blogger platform, the default comments launch in a separate window. If you want to change this to allow comments on the same page you will need to have an understanding of how you can go about changing this. Ideally, you should be able to make any changes that you want without having to depend on anybody else. This may not be possible for everyone and even if you are not a master you should learn about it sufficiently enough to be able give detailed instructions to a software developer or Web designer if required.

The technologies and topics you need to familiarise yourself with include: HTML/CSS, blog publishing software, blogging comments and comments spam, RSS/Atom syndication, full vs. partial feeds, pings and trackbacks, blog carnivals, traffic analysis, social bookmarking and tagging, contextual advertising, cost per click and cost per action, search engine and search engine optimization, page rank and scripting languages like PHP and Python.

Additionally, if you want to sell products and downloadable “digital assets” like eBooks you need to further educate yourself on ecommerce, shopping carts, FTP, SSL and online databases.

You also need to keep a look out for the constantly evolving technology landscape. Any new technology that you come across and don’t understand, immediately Google for it or browse through Wikipedia to determine whether it will have any impact

on your blog and whether you will be able to use the technology to gain some advantage.

4.2 Revenue Channels

At some point in time, once you have established a decent level of traffic, you will need to sit down and decide on how you will derive revenue from your site. Depending on how your blog is oriented and positioned, you may be able to use one or more methods of revenue generation. Whichever method you choose, remember that your monetization strategy is about developing different revenue streams and sources of income. This will protect you from the risk of any single income source drying up and leaving you with no backup plan.

4.2.1 Consulting and speaking engagements

A consulting strategy means that you are primarily seeking consulting work and the blog is both an information and marketing channel to attract new clients. This kind of approach is specially suited if you are running a subject specific, profession oriented blog like say, on architecture.

The primary aim of your blog then, is to show case both your knowledge in the subject area as well as allow your audience to interact with you. Your blog will provide useful, authoritative information to your readers and anyone searching the web for related information. Additionally, it will also provide you with a platform create a reputation for your professionalism, express your opinions on matters of interest to your audience and also, to get new clients.

You may also decide that advertising may not be the best option for your blog. This approach is rare but not unheard of and is usually applicable when you already have a successful offline business and want to enlarge your reach through the web. In most cases however, the approach is to combine consulting and

advertising in a judicious mix that will reinforce and capitalize on each other's strengths. Additionally, by virtue of the popularity of your blogs you could also position yourself as an expert speaker on the subject for conferences and similar events.

4.2.2 Advertising

Advertising is by far the most lucrative option and the most popular choice. Given the wide range of advertising options, it would indeed be difficult to miss making money from your blog if you have a decent level of traffic. In fact, advertising revenue can itself be categorized into multiple revenue streams and channels. The difficulty then is not in deciding whether advertising will work but on deciding which advertising channels are best suited to your blog.

This is largely a trial and error method and you need to keep refining your channel mix to get the maximum possible revenue out of your site. (Note: Some of the advertising networks mentioned in this section may require you to have your own domain name and also may require you to have a minimum number of visitors or page views per month).

4.2.2.1 Contextual

Contextual advertising enables advertisers to display advertisements that closely match with the text of the content on your Web site or blog. The most famous of these is Google's AdSense program. Success with AdSense is not guaranteed and it is advisable to experiment other ad networks also to determine which one works best for you. Some of the contextual advertising ad networks are as follows:

Google AdSense: http://adsense.google.com



Change Language English (US) [Help](#)

Discover your site's full revenue potential.

Google AdSense is a fast and easy way for website publishers of all sizes to display relevant Google ads on their website's content pages and earn money. Because the ads are related to what your visitors are looking for on your site — or matched to the characteristics and interests of the visitors your content attracts — you'll finally have a way to both monetize and enhance your content pages.

It's also a way for website publishers to provide Google web and site search to their visitors, and to earn money by displaying Google ads on the search results pages.



What is AdSense?
[Quick Tour](#)

Getting started is easy!
[Click Here to Apply](#)

More Google tools for publishers

Let our [publisher tools](#) work for you to increase traffic, provide smart analytics, or add interactivity to your site.

Existing Customer Login

Email:
Password:
[Sign in](#)
[Forgot your account?](#)

Learn more

- [AdSense for Content](#)
- [AdSense for Search](#)
- [News](#)
- [Case Studies](#)
- [AdSense Blog](#)
- [Common Questions](#)
- [Optimization Tips](#)

Yahoo Publisher Network: http://publisher.yahoo.com

Yahoo! MyYahoo! Mail

Search the Web [Search](#)

YAHOO! PUBLISHER NETWORK

[Publisher Network Home](#)

[Account Login](#)

**BUILD THE
POWER & INNOVATION
OF YAHOO! INTO YOUR WEB SITE**

EARN REVENUE WITH FROM YOUR WEB SITE

Simply display ads that are relevant to the content of your site and earn money from qualified clicks.* No investment is required and setup is quick and easy.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

[APPLY NOW](#)

ENHANCE YOUR SITE

Create a better experience for your users with our innovative and easy-to-add features.

DRIVE TRAFFIC TO YOUR SITE

Attract people to your site with Yahoo! products and other traffic-generating services.

PUBLISHER BLOG

Create a better experience for your users with our innovative and easy-to-add features.

Updates and Enhancements

Clicksor:<http://www.clicksor.com>
Adsonar:<http://quigo.com>

Contextual advertising is useful when your blog is primarily an information only blog. If you are promoting a specific product or a range of products, you will need to be careful with contextual advertising as there might be links to competitor advertisements.

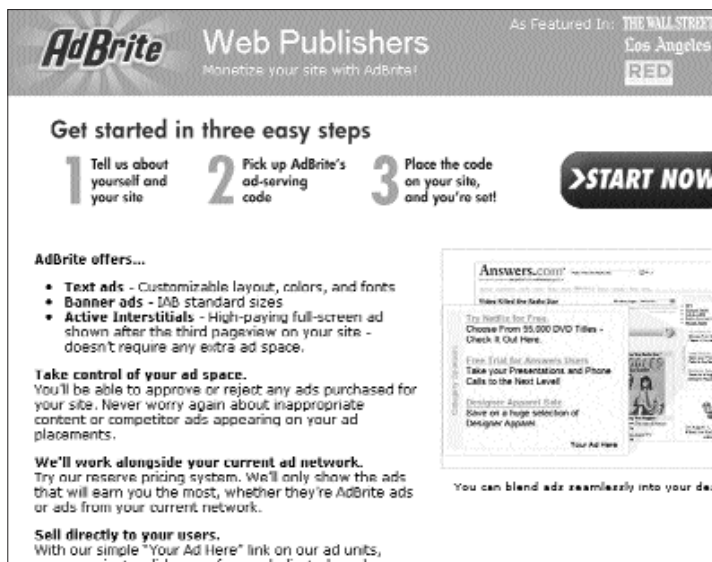
This may be detrimental to sales of your own products. Some of the ad networks like AdSense will also allow you give you some amount of control in blocking out competitor ads.

4.2.2.2 Display

Display advertising is the grand old dame of internet advertising. Banner ads, buttons, and animated graphics are the some of the type of ads which were more prevalent in the old days. While contextual advertising yields better revenue, display advertising should be a serious consideration if your contextual ads are not performing. Some of the better known display advertisers are:

AdBrite:

http://www.adbrite.com/mb/landing_both_pub.php



AdBrite Web Publishers
Monetize your site with AdBrite!

As Featured In: **THE WALL STREET JOURNAL** Los Angeles **RED**

Get started in three easy steps

- 1** Tell us about yourself and your site
- 2** Pick up AdBrite's ad-serving code
- 3** Place the code on your site, and you're set!

> START NOW

AdBrite offers...

- **Text ads** - Customizable layout, colors, and fonts
- **Banner ads** - IAB standard sizes
- **Active Interstitials** - High-paying full-screen ad shown after the third pageview on your site - doesn't require any extra ad space.

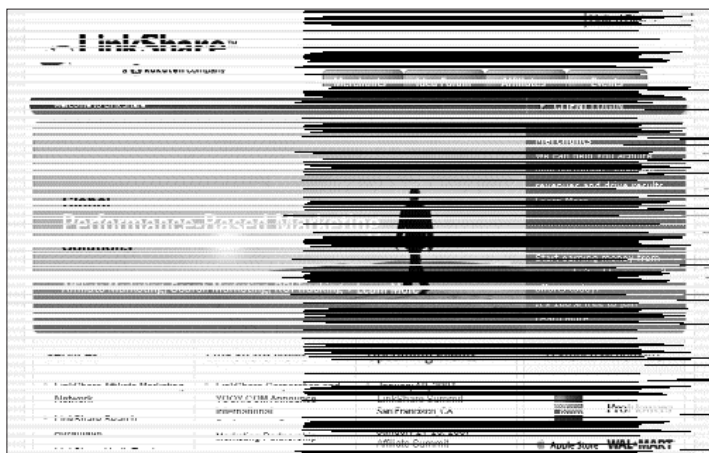
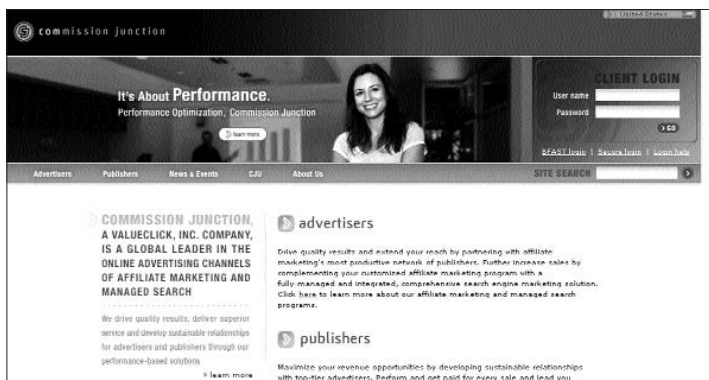
Take control of your ad space.
You'll be able to approve or reject any ads purchased for your site. Never worry again about inappropriate content or competitor ads appearing on your ad placements.

We'll work alongside your current ad network.
Try our reserve pricing system. We'll only show the ads that will earn you the most, whether they're AdBrite ads or ads from your current network.

Sell directly to your users.
With our simple "Your Ad Here" link on our ad units, users see just a click away from a dedicated purchase.

Answers.com
Your content with our Ads can attract top rated, high quality visitors.
Try AdBrite for Free
Choose From 35,000 DVD Titles - Check it Out Here.
Free Trial for Answers Users
Take your Presentations and Phone Calls to the Next Level!
Designer Approved Site
Browse on a huge selection of Designer Apps.
Your Ad Here

You can blend ads seamlessly into your design.

LinkShare:<http://linkshare.com>**Commision Junction:**<http://cj.com>

Some of these networks may also offer interstitial ads—the type that floats in from the side. This type of ad is unpopular, especially with blog visitors due to the high level of irritation caused by having an ad rudely thrust in your face without any warning. Interstitials may also have a negative impact on your

site traffic. That said, it should be noted that you may experiment with this format if you feel that this maybe something that will be acceptable to your audience and will also bring you revenue.

Currently, there is a minor renaissance in display advertising as animated and video ads are becoming increasingly common. While it is still too early to say there is a strong possibility that such ads are going to be an important revenue stream too.

The one big difference between contextual ads and display ads is the payment mode. In contextual ads the usual payment is on the basis of clicks. That is, advertising revenue is calculated based on each visitor who clicks on the advertisement links and is usually referred to as CPC—cost per click.

In contrast, display advertising is usually based on CPM—cost per thousand impressions (M is the Roman numeral for thousand). That is, advertisers will pay on the basis of number of visitors to your site measured in multiples of thousands. Thus if the advertiser is willing to pay \$10 CPM and your monthly traffic is about 10,000 visitors your revenue from display advertising would be \$100.

4.2.2.3 Targeted

This type of advertising is the most lucrative option. Advertisers will directly deal with you offering to pay premium rates for ad spots on your blog. This can either be text based ads or even image or video ads. The revenue from the ad will be all yours.

In targeted advertising, the ad is usually displayed for a fixed period at a specific price as in traditional media like newspapers and magazines. CPC and CPM are usually not important. However, unlike newspapers or magazines the price you charge for the ad spot can be at a superlative premium. To reach this position of being able to command such prices will require a lot of hard work but the effort may be well worth it.

To understand this better, consider the following facts. The world's most popular blog currently is Perez Hilton (perezhilton.com). This blog keeps track of celebrity news and gossip. It has a daily traffic of over 2 million unique visitors.

A 150x200 pixel ad spot on Perez Hilton will cost you \$9000 per week. In comparison an 125x125 pixel ad spot on BoingBoing, another popular site, only costs \$350! This is an extreme example but illustrates the importance of traffic to Web site revenue.

Even if you do not have a large traffic base you can still sell targeted ads on your blog if you take a little bit of time and effort. The crucial points that you need to keep in mind are:

- Have a blog that is authority or an expert in a specific topic. This will attract both an audience of visitors who have interest in your subject and also advertisers who want to reach that specific audience.
- Put up a Media Kit on your blog. A media kit contains information about certain key elements that all advertising customers look for:
- The type of users that visit your site with some demographic details. If you are not able to give demographics you can get an educated guess by using the demographics prediction tool at Microsoft adCenter: <http://adlab.msn.com/DPUI/DPUI.aspx>.
- Rates—what will be the rates you charge and whether it is negotiable
- Types of ads that you will accept and what you will not accept (adult content etc)
- Testimonials from anyone who has advertised with you describing their experience and satisfaction with the results
- Contact details where you can be reached
- Be ready to discuss and negotiate with advertisers. Offer the first few customers free or very low-cost ad spots so that others can realize that you are open to direct advertising too.
- Provide statistics and results to your advertisers. You can use Google Analytics to manage your campaigns.

Seek out smaller companies that cater to your topic area. Working with smaller companies will be much easier as they will be more amenable to work with you than larger companies. Building a solid base of advertisers will be hard work initially but in the end, it will provide with you with a solid source of income.

4.2.2.4 Affiliate Programs

An affiliate in the strictest sense of the word is a partner that works with an advertising network to sell/display their ad inventory. By this definition, all ad networks use affiliate programs to sell different ad products including contextual and display advertising. The distinction between affiliate programs and other types of ad programs is in the revenue model. In an affiliate program, the revenue model is usually measured in terms of CPA—Cost Per Action as against CPC (Cost per Click) or CPM (Cost per thousand impressions). That is, the advertiser will pay for a specific action from the user. This could be something as simple as registering for free on a Web site or more complicated like buying a product. This affiliate CPA model requires hard work and may not be applicable in all circumstances. Some of the top affiliate programs include:

Amazon Associates:

<http://affiliate-program.amazon.com/gp/associates/join>

amazon.com Your Store Make Money See All 34 Product Categories Your Account | Cart | Wish List | Help

Program Overview Marketplace Associates Advantage Web Services Paid Placements On-Demand Publishing

Join Associates

Member Sign-In
Log-in

Join Associates
Join now

Explore Associates
[Compensation](#)
[Online Reporting](#)
[Link Types](#)
[aStore](#)
[Frequently Asked Questions](#)
[Publishers & Vendors](#)
[Current Associates](#)
[Web Services for Associates](#)
[Special Programs](#)
[Operating Agreement](#)
[Associates Blog](#)

Already a member? Sign-in here. Want to join? Click here for easy registration.

Launched in 1996, Associates is Amazon.com's affiliate marketing program. By linking to Amazon products you can add compelling content for your site visitors enjoyment and receive up to 0.5% in ref for doing so.

As one of the first online affiliate marketing programs, Associates has a 10-year track record of developing solutions to help website owners, Web developers, and Amazon sellers make money. Our latest innovations include aStore, Omakase™ Links, and Product Preview.

Current participants in the Amazon Associates program include large, well-known sites, niche content blogs, comparison shopping engines, search engine marketers, and everything in between. Visit our [Associates](#) page to see how some of these members are using our solutions.

How the Program Works

- 1 Associates drive internet traffic to Amazon.com through specially formatted links that allow us to track sales and other activity.
- 2 Associates earn up to 0.5% in referral fees on all qualifying revenue made through their links.
- 3 We send quarterly payment to Associates.

Once you [join the program](#), we will give you access to Associates Central, our extranet exclusive to our Associates. This is the place where you will build your links, view your traffic and earnings reports, and about the latest news and opportunities available to you through the program.

Shareasale:

http://shareasale.com



SHAREASALE
Managed Performance Marketing Solutions

CONTACT US
International
Help and FAQs
Terms of Use
Corporate

GENERATION 3

MERCHANTS
Learn more
Merchant Sign Up
How does it all work?
Pricing
Merchant Login

AFFILIATES
Learn more
Affiliate Sign Up
Take a look at
our Merchant Offers
Affiliate Login

GENERAL INFO
Help with this site

Merchants
[[increase your sales develop a trusted sales force]]

Performance Marketing is one of the most powerful and effective customer acquisition tools available to an online merchant. You decide the commission structure to pay - and only pay when results come in. With a program managed by Shareasale.com, you enable our network of highly motivated sales experts to promote your products to all of their visitors - through websites, email newsletters, and loyal customer bases. You can choose to setup your program to pay on a percentage of a sale (pay-per-sale), a pay-per-lead basis (PPL or CPLA), or a pay-per-click.

Affiliates
[[real time reporting - and on time payments]]

There are currently over **2,000 Merchants** [\[click to preview \]](#) plugged in to the Shareasale.com network. Each of these merchants has a different type of product that they are selling - and each is ready to give you a commission on

We deliver more shoppers with the pre-sell already done.

Bravenet:

http://www.bravenet.com/webtools/affiliate/index.php



bravenet free websites and web tools

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Bravenet Affiliate Program
Earn easy money with your website

[more great web tools >](#)

We'll give you \$1 for each new active Bravenet member you refer to us!

START YOUR AFFILIATE PROGRAM **IT'S FREE**

How exactly does this work?

Clickbank:

http://www.clickbank.com/promote_products.html



CLICKBANK® Home | Sign Up | Marketplace | My Account

Self Products | Promote Products | Buy Products | About Us | Customer Service

Affiliate Home | Sign Up | Marketplace | FAQ | Tools | Resources

MAKE MONEY PROMOTING THE WEB'S BEST DIGITAL PRODUCTS!

ClickBank affiliates are Internet marketers who earn commissions by promoting ClickBank products. Once you sign up as an affiliate, your internet marketing skills can lead to additional income.

Here are just a few of the features and benefits over 100,000 affiliates just can't stop talking about:

- Simple, fast, and free account setup.
- Over 10,000 products to promote.
- Commissions as high as 75%.
- High-converting products drive high ROI on your marketing programs.
- Reliable and accurate tracking gives you credit for your successful marketing strategies.
- We manage the publisher relationships, so you always get paid what you are owed.
- We've never missed a payment.

ClickBank makes it easy to become a successful affiliate. Opening an account and gaining access to our marketplace will provide opportunities you can't afford to miss. Just follow these simple steps and start earning right away:

1. Sign Up as a ClickBank affiliate.
2. Search the ClickBank marketplace for products to promote.

Usually, when using affiliate programs like these the revenue will be dependent on successful sales. For example, the Amazon Associates program pays commissions on books and other products sold through your referral. To extract maximum benefit from this you would need to position your referral links intelligently. Thus, if you refer to a book in your blog post, provide an affiliate link to the book on Amazon.com. Thus if a reader clicks on the link and buys the books at Amazon you will receive a percentage of the sale as commission. Indiscriminately posting affiliate links and images of products on your blog should be avoided. Experiment with the different products and placement plans to determine if they work. If they do work focus on how you can improve it. If they don't work consider removing it at the earliest. See the section 4.3 for more details on how to position your ads.

4.2.2.5 RSS/Atom Feeds Advertising

A large number of blog readers prefer to have their content delivered via RSS/Atom feeds. It makes it simple and convenient for them as all their favorite content is delivered in one easily accessible location—their feed reader software. This however poses as a disadvantage to blog owners who wish to increase their advertising potential by having visitors on their blog site. There are

two methods blog authors use to tackle this problem.

Provide partial feeds that show an introductory snippet about the post and force the users to visit the blog to read the full post. OR the blog author may decide to forgo the revenue potential through site visits and give them full feeds. Full feeds, as the name implies, contain the complete contents of the post.

In both cases advertising can be included in the RSS feed. Research has shown that full feeds are better as this will dramatically increase your subscriber base as compared to partial feeds. Many users just refuse to subscribe to blogs with partial feeds.

Additionally, it has been proven that advertising revenue from full feeds is much higher than from partial feeds. Primarily because users are more amenable to subscribing to full feeds than partial feeds. This in turn will result in higher ad impressions and hence increased ad revenue.

Three programs offer Feed Advertising:

Feedvertising:

<http://www.text-link-ads.com/feedvertising>

Text Link Ads

buy links | make money | about us | contact us

Text Link Ads > Feedvertising

FEEDVERTISING
really simple RSS advertising

Member Login

Bloggers can use our FREE Feedvertising technology to run text link ads in your RSS feed. Whether the ads come from us, your own in-house efforts, or your affiliate links... the choice is totally up to you! **Currently for WordPress 2.0+** users with more blogging platforms coming very shortly. [Sign up now...](#)

Advertisers can finally drill down on

1,203 subscribers | related feeds | subscribe

Techcrunch

Facebook Just Launched Open Registrations

you've also anticipated backlash from existing users who liked Facebook the last week to give users additional say over who can find and

Crunch Network: [MobileCrunch](#) Mobile Gadgets and Applications

8 References | Comments

Feedburner Ad Network:

<http://www.feedburner.com/fb/a/monetize?id=516014>

You are not signed in (Sign in or Register) • Support Forums

Hello, our name is FeedBurner.

Get site statistics as part of StandardStats today. Learn how.

Blogs » Promote content, build & measure audience, make \$
Podcasts » Track your subscribable audio & video content
Commercial » Join Wall Street Journal, USA TODAY, Newsweek, etc.

Feed & Blog Advertising Services [Place an ad now](#) [Learn more](#) • [Manage Campaigns](#)

Start FeedBurning Now. Type your feed or blog URL below. (Why Burn?)

Learn how to burn your Blogger, Typepad, WordPress, MySpace or podcastVideo feed.

☐ I am a podcaster [Next »](#)

Currently feeding **313,806** publishers who've burned **526,357** feeds (as of 01/06/07) [More »](#)

Publisher Buzz [More »](#)
 "Now that BlogBeat stats have been merged with FeedBurner, there's no need to go anywhere else for analytics. FeedBurner's comprehensive stats give you a sense of new vs. returning visitors, volume of traffic from inbound links, and popularity of outbound links (i.e. what you are influencing)." - Peter Kim 01/04/07

The FeedBurner Blog [More »](#)
 • [Headline Animator Overhaul, Part 2](#) 11/02/07
 • [What's Up With That? Vol. 1](#) 1/6/2007
 • [A 360 Degree View of Audience Engagement](#) 1/4/2007

Pheedo:

<http://pheedo.com/publishers>

pheedo
RSS MARKETING SOLUTIONS

[Home](#) [Your Account](#) [Help](#) [Our Blog](#) [About Us](#)

For Advertisers **For Publishers**

Make Money from Your RSS Traffic Discover a New Revenue Stream

Convert your feed traffic into cash money today.
 Our proprietary ad-serving technology is best-in-class; our preferred network of premium advertisers includes HP, Microsoft, Toyota, HBO, and Subaru, and our advanced platform, innovative thinking, and doting customer service give you the tools you need to generate and grow revenue from your feeds.

Pheedo Works for All Types of Publishers
 Since 2003, premium online publishers, running the gamut from global institutions to individual bloggers, have chosen Pheedo to monetize their feeds and sites.

Already have a feed management service?
 No problem. Pheedo's world-class RSS ad server is compatible with leading feed management and blogging services, including Feedburner, MovableType, Typepad, Wordpress and Expression Engine. Custom configuration with other platforms is as simple as giving us a call.

Get started today:
 Enter your feed URL here.

Learn More
 • Where do RSS ads appear?
 • How often to ads appear?
 • How do I get paid?
 • Can I run Pheedo ads on my site as well?
 • I use Feedburner to manage my feeds. Can I run Pheedo's ads?

Additional FAQs

Featured Publishers
 NewScientist.com

The first two have certain limitations. Feedvertising only supports the WordPress 2.0 blogging platform and the FeedBurner Ad Network is an invitation only network based on your subscriber base and the frequency of your posts. Pheedo on the other hand is more flexible.

4.2.2.6 Click Fraud

One area of continuing concern to ad networks (Google, Yahoo,

MSN, ASK) is click fraud. This occurs when people click on ads just to increase their CPC revenue with no real interest in the ads. This usually happens on sites crowded with Ads and with very little real content. The entire objective of this kind of Web site is to have a webpage where people will click on the ads and earn the Web site owners some revenue.

Nowadays, most ad networks have developed anti click fraud technologies and will automatically recognize whether the clicks are coming from legitimate sources or are being clicked fraudulently to increase CPC revenue. In case of abuse, ad networks are quick to detect the activity and may even ban the site from displaying any ads in the future.

4.2.3 Product Sales and Merchandising

If your blog is limited to a particular business model or for a specific product range, you may consider offering your products for sale through your Web site and blog. This would mean that you would need to invest in setting up the relevant technology and business systems to cater to your customers. This could include: a shopping cart system, a secure payment acceptance and refund process, a fulfillment and shipping system, a merchant account, digital certificates, a digital download (FTP) facility and so on.

4.2.3.1 Digital Products

If you are an expert in your area of blogging interest and you have high quality content either in your blog or elsewhere you may be able to package and sell it as an eBook download.

This can then be further expanded to include other information products like videos and DVDs or even printed books.

4.2.3.2 Physical Products

If you have actual physical products that you wish to sell through your blog you may need to pay attention to filtering out competitor's advertisements too. Other than the physical products that you may have direct access to, you can also create merchan-

diznig products like mugs and T-Shirts with the logo of your blog emblazoned on it. This can be easily stocked in and sold through various webstores.

Look at the following sites to give you an idea of the different options possible:

Café Press:

<http://cafepress.com>



Lulu:

<http://lulu.com>



Ebooks:

http://ebooks.com

The screenshot shows the eBooks.com website interface. At the top, it says "Download a book today" and "the digital bookstore". Below the navigation bar, there are several sections: "Best Sellers Alerts", "Free Excerpts", "Best Sellers in...", "Current Best Sellers", "New Releases", and "Featured Titles". Each section displays book covers and titles. For example, under "New Releases", there is "The Raven Prince" by Ursula Dubouville. Under "Featured Titles", there is "The Anxiety Relief Program" by Kathleen O'Connell. The right sidebar lists "Current Best Sellers" with titles like "The Stranger in Her Bed" and "The Boy's Christmas".

4.2.4 Donations

In addition to or in lieu of direct sales and advertising revenue you can also consider asking for donations. However, this is a sensitive issue and should be approached with caution.

If you are already making a lot of money from advertising and other visible monetization sources, asking for donations may put off some readers who may find the action to be too greedy.

To accept donations, you may need to set up a Paypal account or some other such payment receiving mechanism. Even if you do not want to accept donations, you can still use your site to provide free advertising for your favorite charity and direct your users to donate to that organization.

4.2.5 Selling your Blog

Selling your blog is one option that many bloggers don't consider. Unlike other businesses, a blog is a very personal experience and there will be a lot of emotional attachment.

However, circumstances may require that you seriously consider this option.

There are many reasons for selling a blog: you may have started a blog and build a user base but you find that you no longer have the time or energy to continue giving it the attention it deserves. Whatever maybe the reason, keep in mind that a blog is like a business. Once you have brought it up to a certain level of traffic and revenue (equivalent to paying customers in a regular business), it becomes an attractive target for acquisition.

Even without a revenue stream, some blogs maybe attractive to buyers because of the content and the established user base. For the buyer this would mean that they do not have to expend any effort in acquiring new users and the blog would already have gained a reputation as a trustworthy source of information for the topic area.

4.2.6 Blogging for Hire / Blogging Networks

If you find that running your own blog is too much hard work but you still want to become a professional blogger consider blogging for other people or organizations. There are plenty of opportunities as many companies, individuals and blogging networks are always on the lookout for fresh writing talent.

Many businesses are starting to maintain blogs. Usually these are maintained by employees but a significant number are looking to hire specialist bloggers who can provide the necessary writing talent. These blogs will require writers who can understand the company's business and product lines and present these to the blog visitors.

Blogging networks are sites devoted to blogging with dedicated paid writers. While the larger networks (e.g. lifehacker.com) will be difficult to break into you can search for smaller networks that are just starting out and built a writing reputation there.

One thing that you cannot get out of is, putting up written

content that will serve as your resume. Most people looking to hire bloggers will definitely request details on your blogging experience and ask to see samples of your previous writing.

To find opportunities to be a paid blogger, take a look at these sites:

The Blog Resource:

<http://www.theblogresource.com>



Blogger Jobs:

<http://bloggerjobs.biz>



Bloggers for Hire:

<http://www.bloggersforhire.com>



BLOGGERS FOR HIRE

Professional bloggers for your business website.

When a new invention promises to be useful, it ought to be tried. - Thomas Jefferson

(Main)

● **12.01.07 | No Comments |**
The Job Jeff Jarvis Won't Be Applying For
 I have many feels that come to me whenever a company is looking to hire a blogger for a position. One such feel I was able to glean before tossing was a position open in Dell's Commercial Business Group. It made me chuckle wondering if Jeff Jarvis, who would be perfect for the job, is intending to send them a resume for the position. I think not.
 Tags: Jeff Jarvis, Dell, Professional Bloggers

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● **11.01.07 | 3 Comments |**
Earning Through Blogging
Waka Bloggers > Posts > Money/Spill > Earnings > Earnings > WakaBloggers.com > E

Bloggortunity:

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Bloggortunity

Find a job ...seize yours today!

It's official... Bloggortunity has launched! Please subscribe for updates. For best results, maximize your browser.

Blogging Jobs - 1/15/07
January 15th, 2007

Here are your blogging job leads for today:

PHP, WordPress Web Developer - RCC, IT's client is seeking an experienced WordPress Developer to manage their highly-trafficked and growing set of blogs. The blogs have all been highly customized to fit into the technology stack and publishing environment. Beyond having deep experience with the WordPress platform and its plug-ins, the ideal candidate will be a savvy, all-around web applications developer who is comfortable in a LAMP environment.

Read the rest of this entry » » »

Posted in Blogging Jobs | No Comments »

Installing WordPress
January 15th, 2007

You've gotten your domain name and a web host, and now you need to install WordPress on your server. Check your hosting control panel for Fantastico before you download the files, or e-mail your host to find out if they have an auto-install script.

Site Links

- » About Us
- » Advertising
- » Disclaimer
- » Donate
- » Finding a Job
- » Free Ebooks
- » Making Money
- » Submit Blogging Jobs
- » Subscribe
- » WordPress Theme Shop

Get inspired and
on your site with
Google AdSense

Categories

- » Updates
- » Getting Started
- » Design
- » Code Tuts
- » Blogging Jobs

4.2.7 Podcasts (Audio and Video)

Podcasts are another emerging format that is becoming popular. As people are strapped for time and cannot read all the content published on blogs, bloggers are turning to audio and

video recordings in place of the ‘traditional’ text based blog. This approach may in the future, replace text blogs as large numbers of the younger generation take to podcasting. While not suited to every type of blog, audio and video blogs can be useful to reach a mobile and busy audience. Advertising through this channel is still in its infancy but may offer tremendous scope in the future.

4.2.8 Non Blog Writing / Copywriting / Book deals

Finally, your blog can be a place where you show case your writing for non blog writing opportunities, such as for writing advertising copy or writing the content of a Web site or a user manual. You may also use your blogging experience to get a column in traditional media like newspapers and magazines where you have gained the recognition of being an expert blogger in your field. Further, your blogging experience may also provide you with the opportunity to write a book which could be based on the content of your site or could be totally fresh content based purely on your experience and knowledge in the field.

4.3. Implementation Strategies

Given the many choices of revenue streams for your site, the first step is to determine the most effective combination that will work with your blog’s audience and generate the maximum profits. To identify this combination of revenue streams is a trial and error process. This will require your patience and willingness to measure and monitor the effectiveness of each revenue stream. Review the performance of each revenue stream periodically and replace under-performing ones with alternatives that are more promising.

Determining the income level that is normal for your blog will depend on the size of your audience as well as your market segment. Browse through others blogs with a similar audience size and content coverage as yours to get an idea of what you should be

expecting to earn. This will provide you with a rough benchmark to measure the effectiveness of your revenue generation. Don't be afraid to try new things. Be ready to experiment with new types of technology and always keep an eye out for new developments. The danger is not that you will fail but that you will miss opportunities that can quickly generate income. The web is a fast changing place and there are many opportunities that will only have a short window before the big players move in and make it too expensive for you to use capitalize on those opportunities.

Also, site design and layout is important, especially when you displaying ads. Experiment with different layouts, ad types and placement to determine the most effective combination that will generate the maximum in advertising revenue. For example, on some blogs, ads from Google's AdSense has proven effective when displayed as big rectangular boxes without visible borders (known as the blended style) right below the blog title. Look at some successful blogs and the different revenue generation strategies in use. Reviewing such blogs will give you ideas on what you can try.

It is also a good idea to write down how you plan to get from Rs. 0 per month to whatever you decide as the revenue goal that you want to achieve. Your target number could be anything from Rs. 1 to Rs. 1 lakh per month or even higher!

The process of writing down will help you clarify your thought and keep you focused in on achieving the goal. In case of any setbacks down the road, don't get disappointed but calmly analyze the reasons for the setbacks and take corrective action. Be assured that there will be many ups and downs, but by consistently following through on your commitment to both blog and earn money from it you will be amply rewarded at the end.

Remember to keep your monetization plan (or strategy) consistent with your outlook on life. You should be convinced that this is the 'right' way to earn your living. If you start out as an ad free blog and then introduce ads, some regular visitors may not like this

and may post negative comments to this effect. You should be convinced in your mind that this is the way to go and not be disappointed by the negative remarks.

Also, just to increase revenue do not do anything that will alienate your readers. For example while most readers will be appreciative and encouraging when adding ads to your blog, they may not be so favorable if you use some interstitials ads—the floating box ads which slides out across the web page. Interstitials are very intrusive and break your concentration mid way through your reading and can be very irritating. In magazines and newspapers there was a strong separation between advertising and the editorial team. This separation is something that you will need to consciously remind yourself about. If your content begins to be effected by your advertising, it is time to stop and do a serious rethink about why you started blogging in the first place.

On the whole, a revenue generation strategy will enable you to monitor, control and review the performance of your revenue channels. It will also help you to take corrective actions quickly in case of any unanticipated setbacks or if any particular revenue stream is underperforming.

Getting Noticed

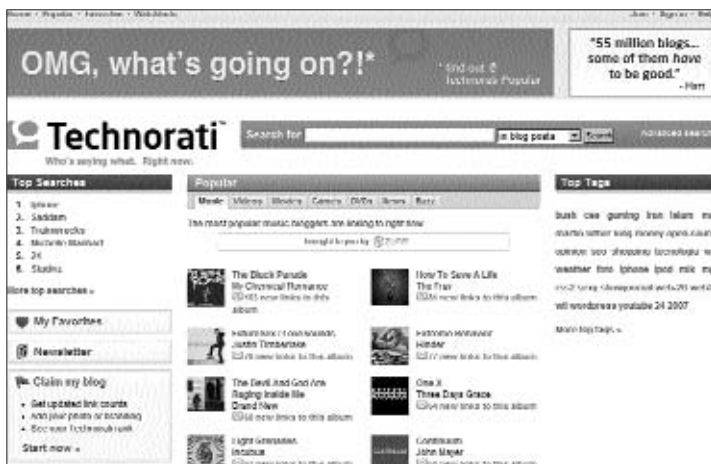


After all the effort you put into your blog, you can't allow it to fade into darkness, can you? There are two aspects to keeping your blog in the public eye, so to speak—getting famous with people, and getting famous with the search engines. Both can be tricky.

5.1 Hello, World!

When you start a new blog, it's automatically listed on the provider's (Blogger or WordPress, for example) directory listing, unless you've explicitly asked for your blog to be kept private (in which case, why are you reading this?). There are, however, specialised directory services—Technorati is one name that should sound familiar—that are dedicated to the cause of telling the world about all the blogs they can read and enjoy. Visitors to such sites can search for blogs on topics they want to read about and rate them; naturally, you want to be one of these blogs.

5.1.1 Technorati (www.technorati.com)

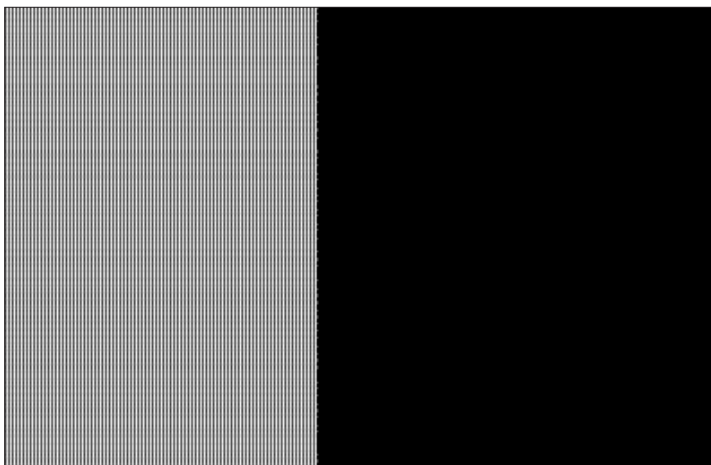


Technorati has become a necessity for bloggers everywhere

It wasn't very famous even a year ago, but Technorati's importance in getting your blog noticed has increased to the point of being crucial. It indexes and categorises blogs on the Web, and also tracks statistics such as the number of Web pages linking to your blog.

Getting Started

You need to sign up to use Technorati; on the Join screen, you have



You can claim your blog either by providing your blog's username and password, or pasting the supplied code into a post

the option to “claim” your blog—basically informing it of the blog(s) you own.

Once you've claimed your blog, you need to add a bunch of information about it so that Technorati can index it according to its subject and keywords or tags. What you put in here will play a key role in Technorati visitors' inclination to read your blog, so write your blog description to grab attention—nothing inaccurate, mind you—a wacky introduction to your site will pique curiosity and get you more visitors. You also get to use 20 tags, where you should put in keywords or keyphrases indicative of your blog's content. These could be “technology,” “holiday in Australia,” and so on.

Once you've done this, Technorati will begin tracking your blog for new posts and check how many people are linking to your blog or posts in your blog. Now all you can do is hope that visitors to Technorati end up at your blog.

Helping Your Blog Along

Technorati categorises blogs by tags, so make sure that every one of your posts has one. It's not difficult—just make sure you're categorising your posts, and Technorati will use these categories as tags. If your blog host doesn't give you this feature, insert the following HTML code at the end of your post:

```
<a href="http://technorati.com/tag/yourtag" rel="tag">Some  
Text</a>
```

This tells Technorati to file this post under the tag “yourtag”. This needn't be limited to just a Technorati link, though. For example, using this code:

```
<a href="http://www.thinkdigit.com/forum" rel="tag">Some  
Text</a>
```

will file the post under the tag “forum”—the text after the last slash in the URL will be interpreted as the tag.

Most blog hosts now automatically “ping” Technorati every

The screenshot shows the Ping-O-Matic website. At the top is the logo "ping-o-matic" in a stylized font. Below it is a navigation bar with links for "Home", "Stats", and "Blog". The main heading is "Welcome to Ping-O-Matic". Underneath is a section titled "BLOG DETAILS" containing three input fields: "Blog Name:" (empty), "Blog Home Page" (containing "http://"), and "RSS URL (optional):" (containing "http://"). At the bottom is a section titled "SERVICES TO PING (CHECK COMMON)" with a grid of checkboxes and links. The links include Weblogs.com, Bloggs, Technorati, Feed Burner, Syndic8, NewsGator, Feedster, My Yahoo!, and PubSub.com.

Use Ping-o-matic to ping all the blog listings on the Web

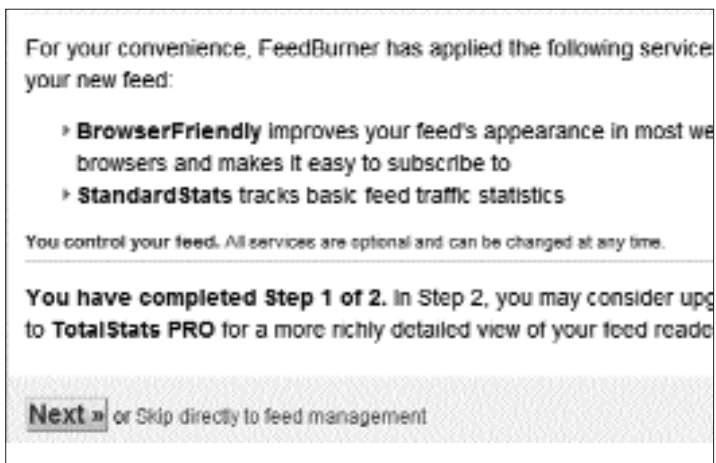
time you make a new post. If yours doesn't, then you can use a pinging service like Ping-o-matic (www.pingomatic.com) to ping Technorati and all other blog directory listings.

5.1.2 FeedBurner (www.feedburner.com)

Your blog-host no doubt creates an RSS feed for your blog (ditch it if it doesn't), so readers don't need to constantly visit the site to read your content, instead doing so from the comfort of their default RSS reader. FeedBurner takes the simple functionality of RSS and "burns" your feed by adding a host of options to help you snag more subscribers.

The Burning Feed

Once you've completed the ridiculously simple registration process, you'll be asked to burn your feed by supplying the URL of your blog's RSS feed. Configure your feed title, and your feed will be assigned a FeedBurner URL instead—<http://feeds.feedburner.com/yourfeedaddress>, for example, letting you customise the "yourfeedaddress" part.

A screenshot of the FeedBurner confirmation screen. The text reads: "For your convenience, FeedBurner has applied the following services to your new feed:". Below this, there are two bullet points: "» BrowserFriendly improves your feed's appearance in most web browsers and makes it easy to subscribe to" and "» StandardStats tracks basic feed traffic statistics". A line of text follows: "You control your feed. All services are optional and can be changed at any time." Below this, it says: "You have completed Step 1 of 2. In Step 2, you may consider upgrading to TotalStats PRO for a more richly detailed view of your feed reader statistics." At the bottom, there is a button labeled "Next »" followed by the text "or Skip directly to feed management".

For your convenience, FeedBurner has applied the following services to your new feed:

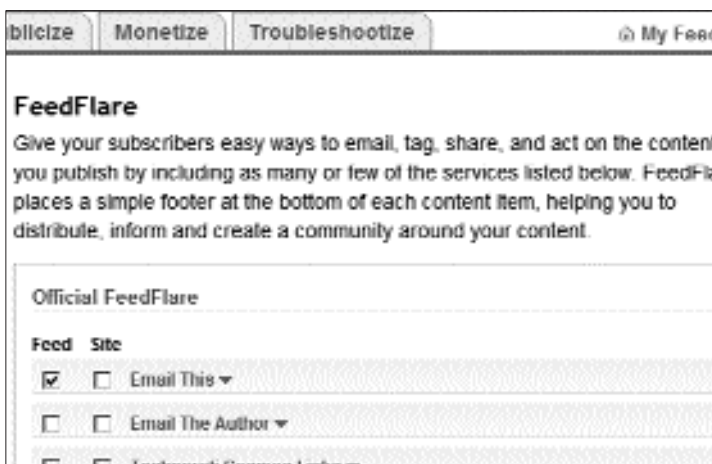
- » **BrowserFriendly** improves your feed's appearance in most web browsers and makes it easy to subscribe to
- » **StandardStats** tracks basic feed traffic statistics

You control your feed. All services are optional and can be changed at any time.

You have completed **Step 1 of 2**. In Step 2, you may consider upgrading to **TotalStats PRO** for a more richly detailed view of your feed reader statistics.

Next » or Skip directly to feed management

Once you've claimed your blog, FeedBurner enables the BrowserFriendly and StandardStats services to make your feed more readable in browsers and track your feed statistics respectively



Use FeedFlare so it's easier for readers to tell their friends about your blog

The next page lets you configure StandardStats, and we recommend checking the Clickthrough option. This lets you track the number of times a link in your post is clicked; if you're linking to corporate Web sites, these statistics should play a role in snagging advertisers.

Optimising Your Feed

When you login to FeedBurner, click on the title of your blog to be taken to the control panel, from where you can select the various ways to configure the way your feed looks in an RSS reader. Here are the options you have:

1. **SmartFeed:** This has quite a simple purpose—to ensure that your feed is compatible with virtually any RSS reader available. Recommended, because you never know what reader someone is using.
2. **FeedFlare:** Enabling this feature lets you put links into your feed posts that will help users give you feedback or tell their friends about your blog—"E-mail the Author", "Digg This", "Post to Del.icio.us", and so on. At the bottom of the page, you need to

select your blog host, and the site will give you a piece of code to insert into your blog template to make the FeedFlare links appear on your Web pages.

3. **Link Splicer:** This lets you include your favourites from networking sites like Digg and Del.icio.us and tell your readers what you like to read about. It doesn't play any role in driving traffic to your blog directly, but it will give people a sense of knowing you, which will in turn keep them visiting your blog with the same, if not greater, regularity. Overall, though, there's no pressing reason for you to have this enabled.
4. **Splicer:** Much like the link splicer, this lets you include your photo feeds from Flickr, Buzznet or Webshots in your feeds. Again, no direct role in getting you more traffic.
5. **Geotag your feed:** This lets you add your geographical latitude and longitude to your feed. Mostly pointless; if you find any use for this, do write in.
6. **Feed Image Burner:** Lets you add a "Powered by FeedBurner" image or any custom logo to your feed.
7. **Title/Description Burner:** Lets you change the title of your feed without having to change the title of your blog (something you'd have to do otherwise).
8. **Convert Format Burner:** Lets you select a specific format (RSS or Atom) to convert your feed to. It's best to avoid activating this—SmartFeed will do all the dirty work of making your feed standards-compatible anyway.
9. **Content Type Burner:** This lets you choose a custom MIME (Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions) type for the feed. If you're not sure what to do with this, leave it alone.
10. **Summary Burner:** This lets you add a little teaser about your

blog to your feed. We recommend using this—a well-written description will draw in the crowds.

Publicising Your Feed

FeedBurner also offers services to help you increase the number of subscribers for your feed.

1. BuzzBoost: This publishes your blog's feed as plain old HTML, which you can then use on any site you control, and thus drive more visitors to your blog.

2. Headline Animator: The Headline Animator gives you the code for a scrolling display of your latest posts that you can paste in the template of your site, or better yet, in your e-mail signature. On online forums that allow it, use this code as your signature to get people to take note of your blog.

3. FeedCount: This is a simple bit of code that displays the current number of subscribers to your feed. It has little or no role to play in actually getting you traffic, but is good to use for bragging, nonetheless.

4. E-Mail Subscriptions: Enabling this option gives you the HTML code required to offer readers the option of subscribing to your blog's feed via e-mail.

Once you've got enough content and subscribers to your feed, you will qualify for the FeedBurner Ad Network (FAN), which allows you to use your feed to make money.

5.1.3 BlogExplosion (www.blogexplosion.com)

BlogExplosion is a unique service that drives traffic towards your blog in exchange for spending some time reading others' blogs.



Increase traffic for your blog by spending some time on BlogExplosion

Using BlogExplosion

Registration is simple enough, after which you're ready to start earning "credits"—one BlogExplosion credit is the equivalent of one person visiting your site.

When signed in, click on Surf Member Blogs. You'll be taken to a member's blog, and there will also be a frame at the top with a countdown and an image with a bunch of numbers (to prove you're not a bot). You need to stay on this blog till the countdown says Go, and then click on the number indicated to move ahead to the next blog. For every blog you visit, you get 0.5 credits.



Use this top frame to visit member blogs on BlogExplosion

You could go ahead and earn credits gratuitously by just spending an hour or so on the service without reading the blogs you're presented, but it's always a good idea to spend some time posting reviews about others' blogs—they might feel compelled to return the favour, and a good review can help boost your readership.

When you've amassed the credits you want for a session, go back to My Account and choose Assign Traffic. Indicative by name, this lets you distribute your credits to any number of blogs that you own and increase their traffic by that much. Hit enough credits, and you'll also be allowed to include your own ad in the BlogExplosion top banner.

Another way to rack up the credits is to rent out ad space on your blog. The Rent My Blog option lasts a week at a time, and lets other BlogExplosion members use your blog for their ads.

5.1.4 Other Services Online

Nothing on the Web is complete without a bunch of clones, of course. Here are some other blog directories and services that you should be a part of:

1. **Weblogs (www.weblogs.com):** Another blog directory, though not as deep as Technorati. It simply tracks newly-updated blogs.
2. **Moreover (w.moreover.com):** This is a service that tracks news goings-on all over the world. If you own a news-related blog, get yourself listed here.
3. **BlogStreet (www.blogstreet.com):** This is a directory of Indian blogs, so you need to register here, especially if your content is India-centric. Blogs are classified by city and language, and there's a Digg-like "Buzz it" link for every blog too.

5.2 Search Me!

A ridiculous number of books have been written about it, but there are few things on the Web as arcane as Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)—you never know what’s going to boost your search engine ranking and when. SEO-ing your blog works better if you’re using your own hosting and content management system—the options available to you are far more comprehensive than free blog hosting. However, there are a few things you can do to enhance your free blog’s search ranking.

5.2.1 SEO-ing Your Free Blog

Firstly, let go of any illusions you might have that Blogger users are at an advantage just because Google owns Blogger. The following tips apply almost universally too:

1. Choose your blog and post titles appropriately. You’ll need something catchy to grab potential readers, but search engines would prefer that you include at least one keyword indicative of the post’s content in every post title.
2. Stick to a general theme for your blog. By their very nature, blogs are riddled with search keywords, and themed blogs more so.
3. Update your blog regularly. Search engines love the “live” Web—sites that are updated with new content on a regular basis.
4. Register yourself on every possible blog listing.
5. Exploit the power of being linked to—make comments on high-traffic blogs (not the I-like-your-site-you-might-like-mine kind, mind you), start discussions, and get yourself blogrolled on as many people’s blogs as possible.
6. Wherever available, always make sure that you have a permalink for each post—this helps search engines index them better.

7. Add your blog feed to your My Yahoo! and My MSN accounts. This will get you listed on Yahoo! and MSN.

5.2.2 Your Own Hosted Blog

If you're using your own hosting, SEO becomes much easier thanks to the number of options you have. WordPress, for one, offers you its own CMS which you can deploy on your server, and there are a lot of things you can do with it.

SEO And WordPress

To optimise your WordPress blog, use the following tips:

1. **Permalinks Again:** By default, links to posts in your blog will look like this: <http://www.yourblog.com/?p=11>. Search engines don't like this much, so go to Options > Permalinks in your admin panel and in the Custom text box, enter “/%category%/%postname%” to change the link's appearance to http://www.yourblog.com/technology/phone_review. This makes your blog not only SEO-friendly, but reader-friendly as well.

This applies to all CMSes, in fact—most of them support SEO-friendly URLs, either as an inbuilt feature or using a plugin—you just need to make sure that the Web server supports URL renaming.

2. **Edit The Page Title:** By default, your page title (the one you see in the search pages) goes thus: Blog Name | Archive | Post Title. You want to bring the post title to the beginning, so search users can instantly know that they've found what they were looking for. To do this, you need to replace this code in header.php:

```
<title><?php bloginfo('name'); ?> <?php if ( is_single() ) { ?> ? Blog
Archive <?php } ?> <?php wp_title(); ?></title>
```

With this:

```
<title><?php wp_title( ' '); ?><?php if(wp_title( ' ', false)) { echo '-'; }  
?><?php bloginfo('name'); ?></title>
```

3. **Get Sitemapped:** Get yourself the Google Sitemap Generator for WordPress from www.arnebrachhold.de/2005/06/05/google-sitemaps-generator-v2-final. Sitemapping your blog will make it easier for Google bots to index updated content for your site. This tip applies even for non-WordPress blogs, and you can get the Google Sitemap Generator at www.google.com/webmasters/sitemaps.

5.3 The Community

This is the “getting famous with the people” part we talked about earlier. Once you’ve done all you can for the search engines, you need to get *yourself* noticed.

1. Take a long, hard look at the content you’re generating. Are you another armchair columnist airing your views on news items like a billion other bloggers? What makes you unique? There’s a huge difference between getting people to come to your blog and getting them to stay there. There’s no trick that will help you if your content is poor or run-of-the-mill. Naturally, writing style plays an important role too. Don’t underestimate the spell-check, and proofread every post before you publish.
2. Update your blog regularly. Regular updates will keep your readers coming back for more, and it’ll help with the search engines, too.
3. Take part in discussions inside the blogging community. Intelligent comments on others’ blogs (don’t spam them) will generate interest in you. Doing so on high-traffic blogs will ensure that someone will visit your profile, and subsequently your blog.

4. Get into link-exchange deals with similar-themed bloggers—get them to link to you on their blogs, and vice versa. In general, make sure that there are links to your blog all over the place—get your friends to put you on their blogrolls, use step 3 above to others to deem you worthy of blogrolling, and so on.
5. E-mail people when you've made a new post. If you get stinkers for spamming, just stick to e-mailing people when you have some killer “don't miss this” content.
6. **Get Dugg:** lots of blog owners Digg their own blogs, resulting in the site's paranoia when it comes to blogs. However, participate in the Digg community as well, and people might end up Digging your blog for you!

Finally, remember that blogging is an ever-changing realm, and there's nothing you shouldn't stop yourself from trying if it isn't illegal.

Blogging Ethics



Bloggers are journalists of sorts, and there exists such a thing as ethics in journalism. In addition, when you maintain a blog, you're *garnering the trust* of many people—which may not hit you in the face while you're sitting at your computer. Ethics does come into play in such a situation, and while we're not going to be preachy, we think we should talk a little about the ethical aspect of blogging.

6.1 The No-Nos

In the previous chapters, you've seen what it takes to be a blogger, what to write about, how to make the moolah, and so on. The idea of making money from the comfort of your desktop is an enticing idea indeed, but it is this idea that drives many a blogger into promoting one's blog by unethical means. Rapid changes in search engine optimisation, or, in simple terms, the advent of smarter technology, would mean only one thing—the death of your blog. Greed kills. To be less dramatic, they'll catch you sooner or later!

Promoting a blog or seeking revenue from it is no sin, but it is the extent to which this is done that decides a blog's ethical aspect. We're assuming you've understood that making money from a blog demands a lot of page views and means there should be ads on the page.

The screenshot shows the Google AdSense dashboard. At the top, it says 'Google AdSense' and 'Earn more revenue'. Below this, there's a section titled 'What's AdSense?' with a description of how AdSense works. To the left, there's a sidebar with links like 'Get started in minutes', 'Access thousands of advertisers', 'Grips the meaning of your content', 'Make money from a Google search box', 'Show only appropriate ads', 'Customize AdSense for your site', 'See what our customers say', and 'Apply now'. In the center, there's a box titled 'Today's Earnings: \$334.34' with a link to 'View payment history'. Below this, there's a table showing earnings data for the last 30 days. The table has columns for 'Advertiser', 'Revenue', 'Clicks', 'Impressions', and 'CPA'. The total earnings for the last 30 days are \$3,343.34.

Advertiser	Revenue	Clicks	Impressions	CPA
AdSense for content	\$3,343.34	10,000	20,000	\$33.43
AdSense for search	\$3,343.34	10,000	20,000	\$33.43
Total Earnings	\$3,343.34			

Earn from your Desktop...AdSense!

6.1.1 Black Hat Blogging

There exist greedy folks who place too many ads and links on their page, and promote their blog by making use of certain underhanded SEO techniques. These, and more, are blanketed under the term “Black Hat Blogging.”

Since we're all Google addicts here, let's get a closer insight into its search engine and how it works. Firstly, Google uses an algorithm called PageRank, which does what it's supposed to do—rank some pages over others, which appear earlier in the search results. (Technically, it's not just the original PageRank algorithm now, but we'll just say "PageRank" for simplicity's sake.)

PageRank analyses links available for the search engine and assigns a numerical weighting to each element of a hyperlinked set of documents, such as the World Wide Web, with the purpose of "measuring" its relative importance within the set. PageRank was developed at Stanford University by Larry Page (hence the name *PageRank*) and Sergey Brin as part of a research project about a new kind of search engine.

Search engine optimisers widely agree that the things that influence a page's rankings include:

- Keywords in the Title tag.
- Keywords in links pointing to the page.
- Keywords appearing in visible text.
- Link popularity (PageRank for Google) of the page.

"Black hat" SEO are methods to try to improve rankings that are disapproved of by the search engines and/or involve decep-

The World's most-viewed Black Hat Blog

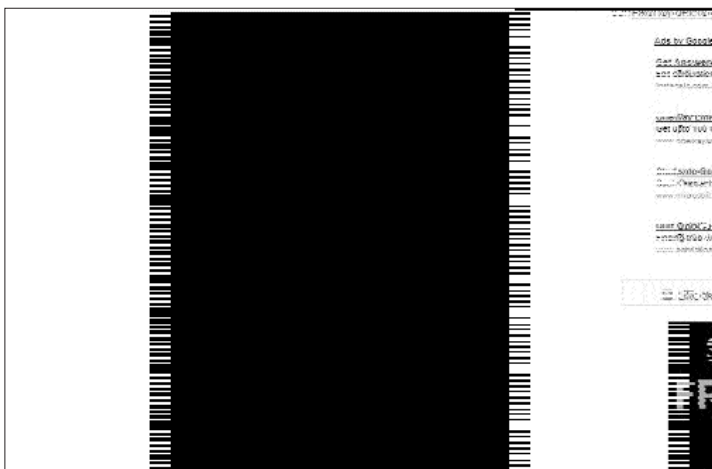
tion. This can range from text that is “hidden,” as for example, text coloured similar to the background, or by redirecting users from a page that is optimised for search engines to one that is more human-friendly. As a general rule, a method that sends a user to a page that is different from the page the search engine ranked is black hat.

Search engines can and do penalise sites they discover using black hat methods, either by reducing their rankings or eliminating their listings from their databases altogether. Such penalties can be applied either automatically by the search engines' algorithms, or by a manual review of a site.

An infamous example is the February 2006 Google removal of both the BMW Germany and Ricoh Germany sites for use of deceptive practices. However, both companies quickly apologised, fixed the offending pages, and were restored to Google's list.

6.1.2 Spamdexing

Another such method is known as spamdexing, or search engine spamming. This is the practice of creating Web pages that will be



This a part of a lenthly scroll—so many advertisements!

indexed by search engines in order to increase the chance of a site or page being placed close to the beginning of search engine results, or to influence the category to which the page is assigned.

“Google bombing” is another form of search engine result manipulation, which involves placing hyperlinks that directly affect the rank of other sites. Some blogs are created for monetising the site using advertising programs such as Google AdSense. Such “Made for AdSense” (MFA) blogs have no redeeming value except to get visitors to the site for the sole purpose of clicking on advertisements. MFA sites are considered to be spamming search engines and providing surfers with less-than-satisfactory search results.

These types of sites are being eliminated in various search engines, and sometimes show up as *supplemental results* instead of being displayed in the main results.

6.1.3 The Legalities

Blogging has brought with it a range of legal liabilities—employers have fired employees who maintain personal blogs that discuss their employers. The major areas of concern are the issues of proprietary or confidential information, and defamation. Several cases have been brought before the national courts against bloggers, and the courts have returned with mixed verdicts.

In Britain, a college lecturer contributed to a blog in which she referred to a politician (who had also expressed his views in the same blog) using various uncomplimentary names, including referring to him as a “Nazi.” The politician found out the real name of the lecturer (she wrote under a pseudonym) via the ISP, and successfully sued her for £10,000 (Rs 9 lakh) in damages and £7,200 (Rs 6.5 lakh) in costs.

In India, blogger Gaurav Sabnis resigned from IBM after his posts exposing the false claims of a management school, IIPM, led to the IIPM management threatening to burn their IBM laptops as a sign of protest against him.

Black hat methods might seem easy to implement in the beginning, but one should remember that by going against the rules, they are only pitting themselves against the largest, smartest and fastest workforces on the planet—the search engines!

Yes, it is about writing smart code, but eventually, the complexity and the work hours it demands would easily outweigh the net revenue earned.

6.2 White Hat Blogging

Now, about the Good Guy's methods. Even the name here draws a parallel, as these techniques are classified as White Hat Search Engine Optimization. White hat methods of SEO involve following the search engines' guidelines as to what is and what isn't acceptable. Their advice generally is:

- Create content for the user, not the search engines.
- Make that content easily accessible to their spiders, and to not try to game the system.

Often, webmasters make critical mistakes when designing or setting up their sites, inadvertently “poisoning” them so that they will not rank well. White hat SEOs attempt to discover and correct mistakes, such as machine-unreadable menus, broken links, temporary redirects, or poor navigation structure. Because search engines are text-centric, many of the same methods that are useful for Web accessibility are also advantageous for SEO.

A detailed case for this common ground, cited by the W3C with respect to Developing a Web Accessibility Business Case, is *SEO—A Positive Influence on Web Accessibility*. Google has brought the relationship between SEO and accessibility even closer with the release of Google Accessible Web Search which prioritises better-accessible sites.

Methods exist for optimising graphical content, including ALT attributes, and adding a text caption. Even Flash animations can be optimised by designing the page to include alternative content in case the visitor cannot read Flash.

Some SEO methods considered proper by the search engines:

- Using a unique and relevant title to name each page.
- Editing Web pages to replace vague wording with specific terminology relevant to the subject of the page, and which the audiences the site is developed for will expect to see on the pages, and will search with to find the page.
- Increasing the amount of unique content on the site.
- Writing quality content for site visitors instead of search engines.
- Using a reasonably-sized, accurate description Meta tag without excessive use of keywords, exclamation marks, or off-topic terms.
- Ensuring that all pages are accessible via anchor tag hyperlinks, and not only via Java, JavaScript or Macromedia Flash applications or meta refresh redirection; this can be done through the use of text-based links in site navigation and also via a page listing all the contents of the site (a site map).
- Allowing search engine spiders to crawl pages without having to accept session IDs or cookies.
- Participating in a Web ring with other quality Web sites.
- Writing useful, informative articles under a Creative Commons or other open source license, in exchange for attribution to the author by hyperlinking.

These along with certain ethics determined by nothing more than common sense form the basis of a good, clean and ethical blog.

6.3 C.O.B.E.

Some of the points listed in the Code of Blogging Ethics (C.O.B.E.) by Martin Kuhn are listed below. You can find the C.O.B.E. at <http://rconversation.blogs.com/COBE-Blog%20Ethics.pdf>. Kuhn is a doctoral fellow researching Media Law at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He began his C.O.B.E. project in December 2004.

WFMU's BEWARE OF THE BLOG
A RADIO STATION THAT BITES BACK

DECEMBER 31, 2006
The Mysterious Mr. Morphine

It has been a damn fine year for fans of everyone's favorite morphine addict ... Peter Lorre. What's that? Peter Lorre was addicted to morphine? Yes. For decades? Yes. Even during all his turns as a white guy pretending to be Asian? Yes.

Well, it's like I was saying, it's been a fine year for Peter Lorre fans especially those like myself who knew nothing of his drug addiction. This information comes from just one of many exciting Peter Lorre related releases of this past year, Stephen Youngkin's comprehensive biography of Mr. Melo himself, titled *The Lost One* (it actually came out at the tail end of 2005). The book sheds new light on fascinating and scandalous incidents in the life of I am the likes of which would've made Kenneth Anger soil his pants. From Lorre's agonizingly long bout with morphine (he was under the influence of the narcotic for the overwhelming majority of the films he appeared in, including his two most famous—Casablanca and The Maltese Falcon), to his close friendship with defiant left wing bohemian *Butch Brecht*, as well as anecdotes of his unbearable halitosis which plagued him throughout the nineteen thirties until 20th Century Fox paid to have his teeth fixed, the book is chock full of

MP3
VIDEO
RADIO RELATED
WFMU RELATED
SEARCH THE BLOG

LISTEN TO WFMU
MP3 BROADCAST
MP3 DOWNLOAD
REALAUDIO
WINDOWS MEDIA
OGG VOICEDIAL
WFMU ARCHIVE

One of the best “white” blogs

- Promote free expression by posting on your blog on a regular basis as well as visiting and posting on other sites in the blogosphere.

(Interact. Don't be a loner.)

- Avoid restricting access to your blog by certain individuals and groups and never remove posts or comments once they have been published.

(Essentially, be honest—don't get overly protective about your blog. A blog is more dialectical than rhetorical, or, at least, it should be that way—unless you're famous *and* exceptionally brilliant.)

- Emphasise the “human” elements in blogging by revealing and maintaining as much of your identity as is deemed safe.

(Don't cower under a nick forever, though that's OK right in the beginning.)

- Promote equality by not restricting specific users or groups of users from your blog.

(Simple. Be “democratic,” as we've mentioned in this book.)

- Minimise harm to others by never knowingly hurting or injuring someone with information you make available on your blog.

(“First, do no harm.”)

- Build a community by linking your blog to others, and maintain a blogroll to encourage visitors to your blog to visit others and facilitate relationships between you and your readers.

(This, again, deals with being social, and the human element.)

- Strive for factual truth and never intentionally deceive readers. Make yourself accountable for information you post online.

(Remember, when you're blogging, it might seem like you're doing keystrokes at your desktop—but there are real human beings out there reading what you're writing.)

- Cite and link to all sources referenced in each blog post, and secure permission before linking to other blogs or Web content.

- Promote interactivity by posting regularly to your blog, honouring such etiquette and protocol policies that are posted on blogs you visit, and make an effort to be entertaining enough to inspire return visits to your site.

Bloggers should:

- Never plagiarise.

(Be honest to yourself and you're safe.)

- Identify and link to sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.

(Similar to what we just said: you're actually reaching out!)

- Make certain that blog entries, quotations, headlines, photos and all other content do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.

(“Out of context” is key here. Often, you see something someone said, and latch on to that one phrase—don’t.)

- Never distort the content of photos without disclosing what has been changed. Image enhancement is only acceptable for technical clarity. Label montages and photo illustrations.

(Not following this rule is pretty much the same thing as lying, and since a picture is worth a thousand words...)

- Never publish information they know is inaccurate – and if publishing questionable information, make it clear it’s in doubt.
- Distinguish between advocacy, commentary and factual information. Even advocacy writing and commentary should not misrepresent fact or context.
- Distinguish factual information and commentary from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.
- Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by blog content. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
- Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- Recognise that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of information is not a license for arrogance.

(These three tenets apply to journalism as well.)

- Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.
(Don’t be a tabloid. At least, try not to be; even if you maintain a *gossip* blog, don’t over-sensationalise things)

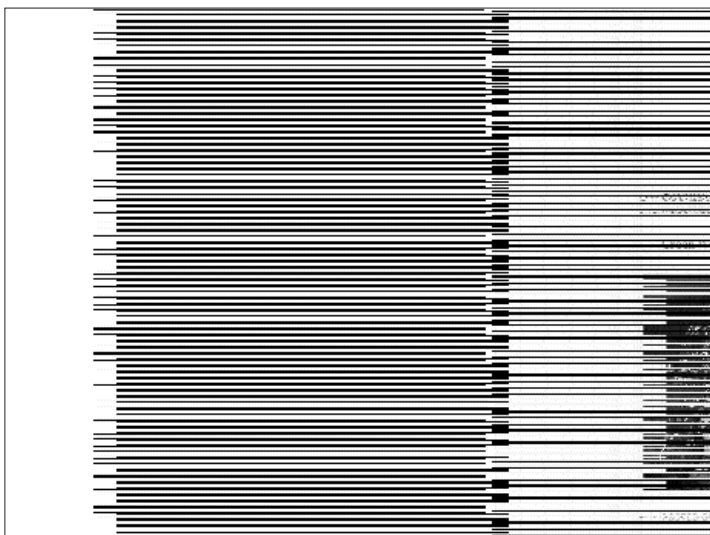
- Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
(This can come from basic humility.)
- Explain each blog's mission and invite dialogue with the public over its content and the bloggers' conduct.
- Disclose conflicts of interest, affiliations, activities and personal agendas.
(This is important so readers can put your content in context.)
- Deny favoured treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence content. When exceptions are made, disclose them fully to readers.
(That's what black hat blogging is all about.)
- Be wary of sources offering information for favours. When accepting such information, disclose the favours.
(Ditto.)
- Expose unethical practices of other bloggers.
(If you're sincere enough.)

6.4 Green Hat Blogging

We wonder if there is any debate that has a real unanimous conclusion no matter what the topic is, here is one such argument which balances both sides of this Ethical Blogging coin. This community calls itself Green Hat Bloggers, and claim to be make the balancing act between the Good and the Evil. Well-known blogger Jason Golod's take on this is to be found at www.golod.com/2005/12/white-hat-black-hat-how-about-green-hat/.

6.5 Common Sense

It wasn't long ago that bloggers and money had nothing to do with each other. But as the blogosphere exploded into the public consciousness over the past year—blog search engine PubSub estimates there are more than 8 million blogs—it was inevitable that the captains of commerce would latch onto this increasingly popular form of personal media.



Ads + Content = Green Hat

Black hat, White hat, or Green hat... you don't even need to understand these terms, strictly speaking. Just use common sense!

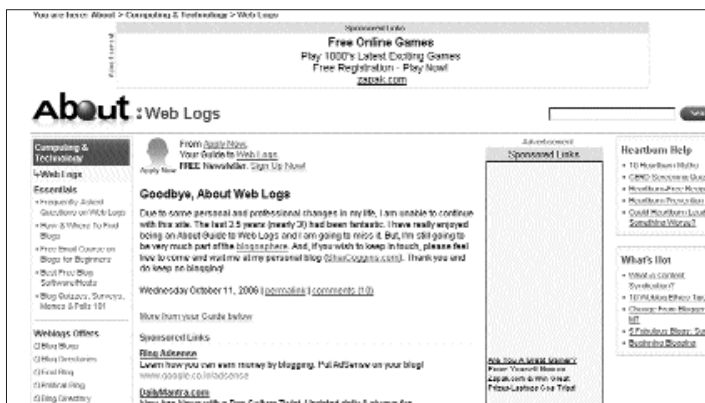
If you're thinking about making a career out of blogging, the best way to ensure a steady revenue stream is by building a solid reputation. Remember, there are no shortcuts!

Additional Resources



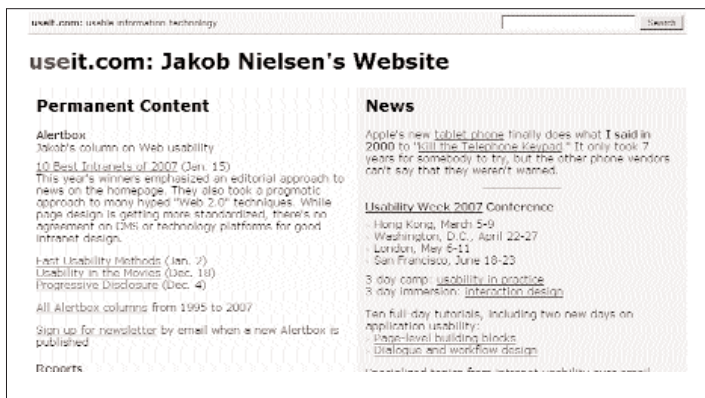
We believe we've spoken enough in the preceding pages to get you started off on your blog. But, as you know very well, there's at least a million times more info on the subject on the Internet. Here are some sites and Web pages we believe you'll find useful—if what you've read has kept you interested.

1. About: Web logs (<http://weblogs.about.com>)



A one-stop location to learn everything about blogging. Tips, tricks, and tutorials with information regarding every aspect of blogging that a beginner would be looking for.

2. Weblog Usability: The Top Ten Design Mistakes (<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/weblogs.html>)



Dr Jakob Nielsen is one of the world's leading authorities on how to make Web sites and software more user friendly. In this article, he explains the top 10 mistakes blog owners should avoid.

3. Writing for the Web

(<http://www.useit.com/papers/webwriting/>)

Again from Dr Nielsen, a collection of resources and links on how to write for the web.

Writing for the Web

Research on how users read on the Web and how authors should write their Web pages.

- **Short summary** of the original findings: How users read on the Web ([read this one first](#))
- **F-shaped pattern** for reading web content, as seen in eyetracking studies
- **Eyetracking** of people reading email newsletters
- **Low-literacy users** exhibit different behaviors
- **PR and press releases** on corporate websites (75 design guidelines based on usability studies of how journalists visit company sites)
- **Email newsletters** (165 design guidelines: scannability even more important than for websites)
- **Writing transactional email** and confirmation messages
- **Users on the Web**: poor reading skills and low patience levels mean that text has to be ultra-concise for teens and that more information must be communicated in images
- **Teasing blogs**: what's the site about?
- **Use old keywords** when writing to be found by search users
- **Microcontent**: writing headlines, page titles, and email subject lines
- **How to write** inverted pyramids in cyberspace
- **Information pollution**
- **Intranet usability**, including guidelines for intranet content, news on intranets, HR manuals, and how to present information about projects, teams, and individuals on intranets
- **Full paper** documenting the original research from 1997 (long): **Concise, SCANNABLE, and Objective: How to Write for the Web** (unfortunately this paper was written for print and not online)
- **Case study: Applying Writing Guidelines to Web Pages improved usability by 159%** when rewriting sample pages from a popular website

Other Writing Sites

Our research shows that external links enhance the credibility of a site, so here are links to some other good sites about how to write for the Web :-)

- **GoodDocuments.com**: a site affiliated with the Trellix site authoring tool (but their advice applies even if you use other tools). Focus on writing for intranets and other utility-oriented sites.

4. Getting Things Done

(<http://www.davidco.com/store/catalog/>)

In a busy, busy, busy day, finding time to spend on your blog is going to be the biggest problem. Getting Things Done is a very popular time management philosophy developed by veteran productivity guru David Allen. Visit his company's store catalogue for some free articles that can help you organise your time better. If

The screenshot shows the homepage of The David Allen Company. The header includes the company name and tagline "A Smarter Way to Work & Live". Navigation links include Home, Business & Corporate Services, For Individuals at Work & Home, Products, Shopping Cart, Site Index & Search, Contact, and GTD Connect. The main banner reads "Get greater results, faster and easier". Below this, there are several featured sections:

- NEW! GTD RoadMap**: A section with a photo of David Allen and text describing the GTD system as a game of work and the business of life. It mentions that it's the world's leading productivity system and provides a link to "Find out more" and "Get your RoadMap".
- Video Now, Understand Do**: A section listing seminars and resources, including "The 4 Tools" and "The 4 Principles". It also mentions "David Allen's work is both powerful and important" and provides a link to "View David's Video".
- GTD RoadMap**: A section with a photo of David Allen and text describing the GTD system as a game of work and the business of life. It includes a link to "What is GTD?" and "What's Up At DavidCo".
- QUICK'S CORNER**: A section with a photo of David Allen and text describing the GTD system as a game of work and the business of life. It includes a link to "QUICK'S CORNER".

you like them, you may want to invest some money in some of his more useful products as well.

5. Tips for Blog Design

(<http://www.photoshopsupport.com/tutorials/jennifer/blog-templates.html>)

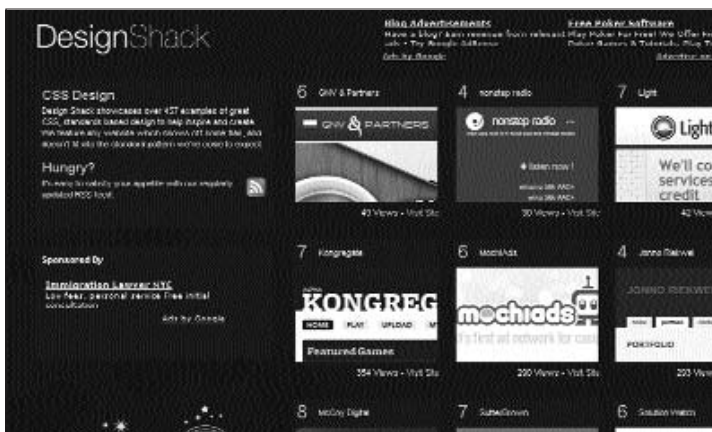


Whether you choose to host your own blog or use one of the free blogging services, you will invariably spend moments of agony in deciding how to make your blog look unique. This article will help ease your pain. While it has a Photoshop slant, you should be still able to find many useful and usable suggestions in there.

6. CSS & Blog Design

(<http://www.designshack.co.uk/>)

Once you cross the chasm from being a plain old HTML hack, you will want to dive into the joys of CSS. To see what can be done with a little CSS magic, check out Design Shack's collection of over 400 inspiring Web site and blog designs.



7. Blog Design & Development (<http://www.mandarindesign.com/>)

Another great collection of tips, tricks, and tutorials on blog design and using CSS.



8. ibibo.com

The great Indian blogger hunt is on! Ibibo.com is an Indian blogging network that has just opened. Take a shot at Rs 6 lakh in prize money for the First Place winner. A total of Rs 1.5 crore is going to be paid out to the top 100 bloggers. The first payout hap-

ibibo
i build • i bond

Blog Photos Game Job Pixrat

Search now

HOME MY IBIBO BLOGGER HUNT BLOGS PHOTOS HELP

ibibo
The Great Indian Blogger Hunt
Runs Every Month

Running Now!
Great Indian Blogger Hunt

Get paid to blog. **Every month! Rs 1.5 crore** to be earned. **Top 100 Bloggers** every month get paid! See the **pay-out** First list of top 100 Bloggers on February 15, 2007

[Learn more](#)

Blogs
Get paid to blog! Write or show anything. Explore and read thousands of exciting blogs from India.

Photos
Store, search and show off your photos to other Indians. View thousands of interesting pictures.

Games
Play hundreds of free games. Challenge other players. Play Fun and learning activities for kids.

Blog Job Search
Search and locate jobs in India from thousands of job sites and listings.

Pixrat
Collect your favourite pictures from India and around the world. Share them with the community.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

pens on February 15, and the top 100 bloggers as of that day will get a combined payout of Rs 2.9 lakh, including the First Place winner who takes home 1.5 lakh!

9. Blog Templates (<http://blogskins.com>)

Home | All Skins | Tags | Forums | Contribute | Contacts | About | Advertise

<BlogSkins>
You are not logged in. You can login

Login

Username:
Password:

Search Skin

10 Most Recent

(Make This List Available)

1. [paulineconnor100](#)
2. [dave_100](#)
3. [TUTU_100](#)
4. [TUTU_100](#)
5. [TUTU_100](#)
6. [TUTU_100](#)
7. [TUTU_100](#)
8. [TUTU_100](#)
9. [TUTU_100](#)
10. [TUTU_100](#)

Skin Of The Day

View previous Skin Of The Day.

[Skin Of The Day](#) [Skin Of The Day](#)

Featured Contributor

Honoured to this month's new Featured Contributor.

This Featured Contributor was suggested and written by (Linnhoushi).

Who should be the PC?
Linnhoushi (MOT)

I have a very good reason for that, MOT is a inspiration to us all. And as you can see, He is well liked in the community as well as the forum. And the amount of green flags his got has also proved what a wonderful friend, and Blogmaster he is to all of us. He has contributed alot to Blogskins since he first arrived. His advice about and helping all of us together is just admirable alone. He has also had a big part of helping to organize the Blogskins Community. Even though with his studies following him behind, He always finds time to give helpful comments, And stay active in the forum.

In Blogskins, He's like a leader to most of us. Along with his well-known clan, LEO He never fails to amuse us anyway with his out-going

Network Walkman MP3
Get your covers and accessories for all Walkman
UK Next day ship
[network-walkman.co.uk](#)

I Use All
[MOT] [Linnhoushi]

If you are not yet ready to dive into the mysteries of CSS, XHTML, JavaScript, and Photoshop, then check out this site. Blog Skins is for those who “suck at design.” Or maybe you do have this great design idea in your head but you have no idea how to go about getting it out of the door. Browse through the vast collection of con-

tributions and you're sure to find one you like. Supports most blogging platforms.

10. Blogger Templates

(<http://blogger-templates.blogspot.com/>)



If you are blogging on Google's Blogger platform, this site has a collection of ready-made templates that you can use straightaway. Note, however, that these templates will most likely not work with the new Blogger that has just come out of Beta. This goes for all templates you find for the Blogger platform.

11. The Ultimate Blog Templates List

(<http://tinyurl.com/y87hg3>)



A list of links that links to various blog template sites. Slightly old but still useful.

12. About.com's Collection of Blog Templates (<http://tinyurl.com/v993x>)



Large collections of templates for most popular blogging platforms like Blogger, Movable Type, WordPress, My Space and so on. They also have some tutorials on HTML and CSS, which is useful if you want to learn how to control the look and feel of your blog.

13. More Templates (<http://blogtemplates.noipo.org/>)

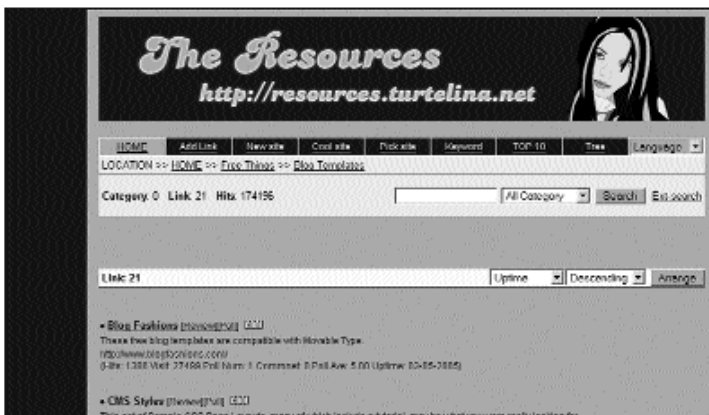


A slightly older collection of templates for Blogger and Movable Type.

14. The Resources

(<http://resources.turtelina.net/index.php?cat=40>)

Another collection of links to various sites with blog templates.



15. The Blog Business Summit

(<http://blogbusinesssummit.com>)

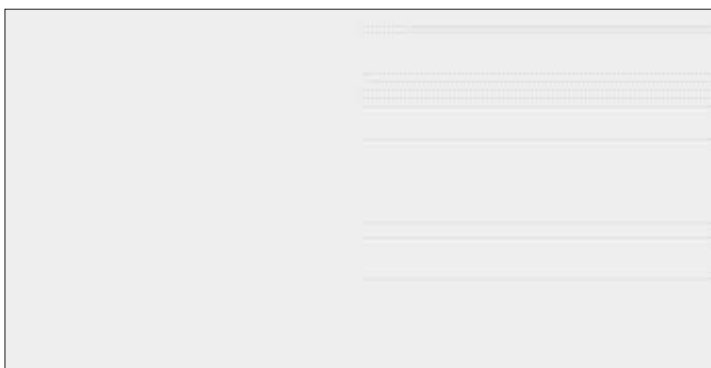
This blog keeps track of seminars and conferences on the topic of business blogging. Though primarily a US site, it is a useful infor-



mation source for those who want to stay on top of business blogging news.

16. The Blog Resource

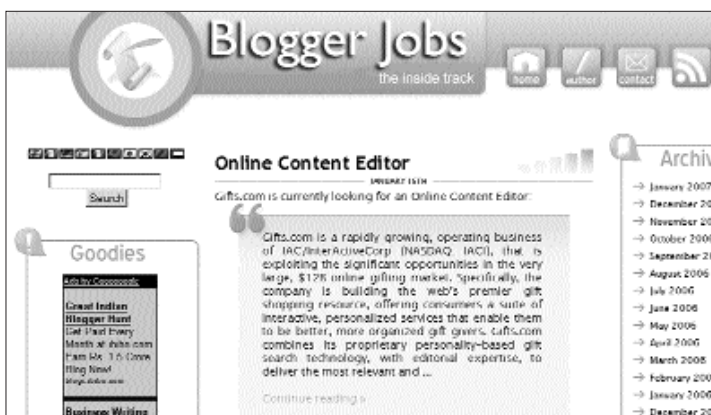
(<http://www.theblogresource.com/blog>)



A relatively new blog on blogging. It is intended to be a compendium of resources about blogging, how to promote your blog, how to monetise your blog, and so on. There's relatively little content, but keep it on your watch list.

17. Blogger Jobs

(<http://bloggerjobs.biz>)



A blog about blogging jobs. This is a frequently updated blog listing various blogging jobs from different companies. Again, while it's primary focus is the US, there are many purely online job postings that may be worthwhile to apply for.

18. Bloggers for Hire

(<http://www.bloggersforhire.com>)

Discusses the professional blogging industry with news, opinions, reviews, tips and tricks.

B4H
BLOGGERS FOR HIRE
Professional bloggers for your business website.

When a new invention promises to be useful, it ought to be tried. -Thomas Jefferson

[Meta]

12.01.07 | No Comments |
The Job Jeff Jarvis Won't Be Applying For

I have many feeds that come to me whenever a company is looking to hire a blogger for a position. One such feed I was able to glean before today was a position open in Delta Commercial Business Group. It made me chuckle wondering if Jeff Jarvis, who would be perfect for the job, is intending to send them a resume for the position. I think not.

Tags: Jeff Jarvis, Dell, Professional Blogger

Share this: 1 link

CONTACT
UNEMPLOYMENT PARTNER:
- JIM TURNER

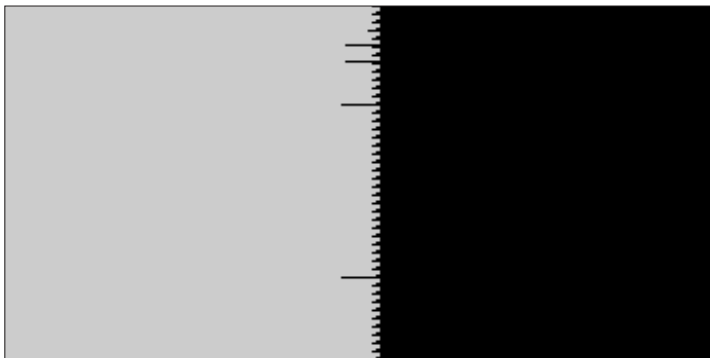
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Great Indian Blogger Hunt
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Month of Nov-07
Email: ro.1.5@india.com

19. Blogging Help

(<http://www.blogginghelp.com>)

More in-depth blogging help and advice, covering everything from



marketing, making money from your blogs, writing tips and more.

20. Blogging for Dollars

(<http://www.dollars2blog.com/blog>)

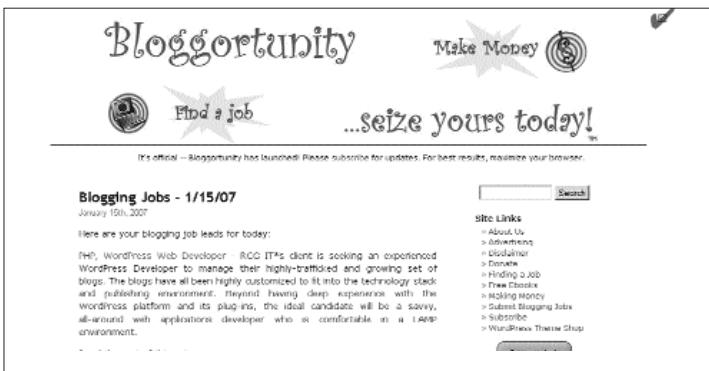


This blog takes a look at the different issues involved in blogging and offers advice and suggestions on various techniques you can use to improve and promote your blog.

21. Bloggortunity

(<http://www.bloggortunity.com>)

Provides postings of latest blogging jobs as well as articles on how to make money from your blogs. Useful for the both the advanced user and the newbie.



22. Business Opportunities Weblog (<http://www.business-opportunities.biz/>)



Goes beyond just blogging opportunities. Looks at the latest in business opportunities with a special focus on online businesses.

23. Business Blogwire (<http://www.businessblogwire.com>)



Keeps track of all the latest news from the world of business blogging. It is currently doing a round-up of the Fortune 500 companies with blogs.

24. Turn Your Blog Into Money Making Machine (<http://tinyurl.com/ydp3xa>)



Another blog devoted to information on how to make money from your blogs. Discusses the ins and outs of making money through your blog and offers suggestions on how to get your blog higher ranked with search engines.

25. Conversion Rater (<http://www.conversionrater.com>)



Once you start getting the traffic, the problem of meaningful interpretation is a big one. How do you track the traffic hitting your blog? What are the important things to watch out for? Conversion Rater tackles the big area of Web analytics in easy to eat bites.

26. Occam's Razor

(http://www.kaushik.net/avinash)



Avinash Kaushik is a self-confessed Web Analytics fan who has turned his passion into a blog. This is an informative blog that takes an in-depth look into the topic of Web site (and blog) analysis. May be useful in helping you optimise your blog.

27. Fab Freelance Writing

(http://www.fabfreelancewriting.com/blog)



For those of you who prefer to get into freelance writing rather than blogging, this site offers tons of tips, suggestions and advice on how to break into the space. As we've stated elsewhere in this

book, they also recommend that you maintain a blog to help you get started.

28. Blogging Articles

(<http://ezinearticles.com/?cat=Internet-and-Businesses-Online: Blogging>)

A collection of articles devoted to the various aspects of blogging.



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29. Monetize your Blog

(<http://monetize-your-blog.blogspot.com/index.html>)

Another blog on how to make money from your blog. Reviews many advertising networks and techniques and also gives insights into experiences with various services.


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[Contact Us](#)
[Privacy Policy](#)

[Create Blog](#)
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MONETIZE YOUR BLOG

THIS IS THE LATEST OF OUR PREVIOUS ATTEMPT TO DISCOVER THE PROS AND CONS OF CREATING A BLOG WHICH EARN (AT LEAST A LITTLE) MONEY. FEATURES INFORMATION ABOUT BLOG PROMOTION AND PARTNER PROGRAMS AND REVEALS RELEVANT FACTORS.

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[Google AdSense \(Blog\)](#)
[Blogroll](#)

[Email Subscribers](#)
[Email Newsletter](#)
[Webmaster Tools](#)

TOP MONEY MAKERS

Get paid to post with myBlog

Test Link Ads - now available for Blogger Blog

Generate revenue from your website, Google AdSense.

Make money from your blog with BidVertiser

Get paid to contribute on MyWriter

POPULAR POSTS

Introduction

List of Blog Directories

Monetize Your Blog in one month old

Twitter Hacks to promote Blog?

What are AdSense Channels

Fixed & Web Site Designer
Free directory of web site designers and your targeted for Free Home

28 Search Engines: Free
Free search engines submission tool, blog, my blog, free, submit now!

Buy And Sell Post Free
Free website site, sell your business, for all new users, sell on Europe.

Socials, CMS, Tools, etc.
Free and low cost resources to build a multimedia identity online.

[Blogger Tools](#)
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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2007

Promote Your Blog with Blog Buzz

30. Blogging Jobs/Blogs for Sales (<http://tinyurl.com/ykqjvj>)



Lists blogging jobs, blogs for sale and related services.

31. Probblogger (<http://www.probblogger.net>)



A very popular and huge resource articles on how to become a professional blogger. Probblogger was one of the earliest blogs and has high rankings both in Google and Technorati.

32. Shoe Money

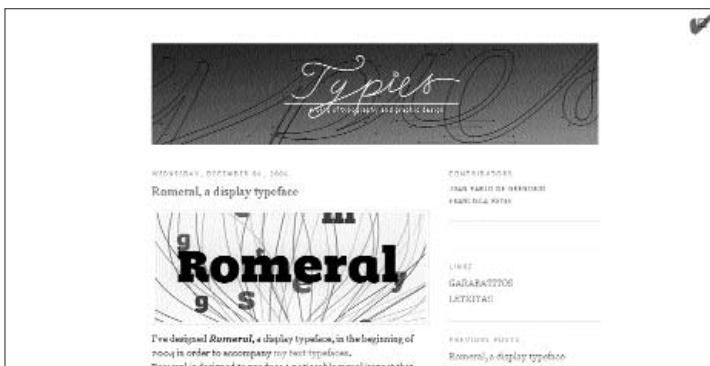
(<http://www.shoemoney.com>)

A blog that discusses the issues involved in making money online, not just related to blogging.



33. Typies - Blog Typography and Graphic Design

(<http://typies.blogspot.com/>)



For those of you who agonise over which typeface is most suited to your blog, visit the Typies blog. Not so frequently updated, but still contains useful, usable information. Don't forget to check out the 15 tips to choose a good text type (<http://typies.blogspot.com/2006/11/15-tips-to-choose-good-text-type.html>)

34. Marketing for bloggers and small businesses online (http://andywibbels.com)

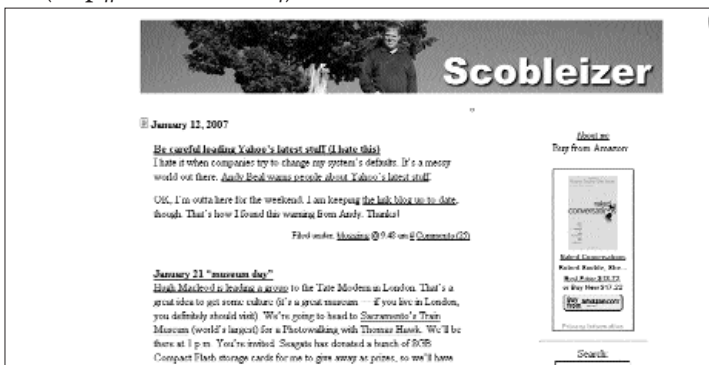
A blog focused on helping small businesses and bloggers with marketing advice. Also, provides consulting services to small businesses to set up their own blog.

35. Deep Jive Interests (http://www.deepjiveinterests.com)

Keeps track of news and gossip from the tech industry, offers some useful insights on blogging and web design.

36. Scobleizer

(http://scobleizer.com/)



A very popular blog by Robert Scoble, an ex-Microsoft Technology Evangelist, covering tech news. Reviews and reports on the latest happenings from the tech world with useful insights and opinions.

37. Personal Development

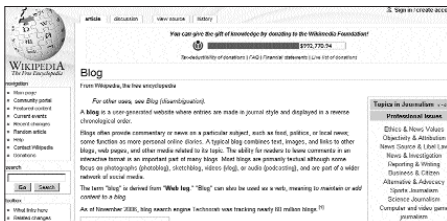
(http://www.stevpavlina.com/blog)

Steve Pavlina's personal development blog is a rich resource for bloggers and non-bloggers alike. He also does an extensive article on how to make money from your blog.



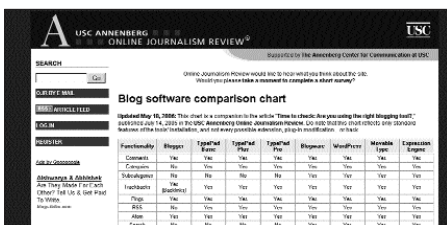
38. Blog - Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog>)

A comprehensive Wikipedia article covering the history of blogging and its present state. Contains a ton of links to other blogging resources.



39. Comparing and Choosing a Blog Platform (<http://tinyurl.com/ade8f8>)

If you are undecided how to start these two links will take you to an in-depth article on how to choose your blogging platform, and a comparison of the different platforms along with their features.



40. Blogging Sites, Tools and Links (<http://tinyurl.com/yz4vzc>)

A short review of different blogging platforms, tools and links.

41. The Indibloggies (<http://www.indibloggies.org>)

This is the *desi* edition of blog awards handed out to the best Indian bloggers, both in India and abroad.